

SIGHT & SOUND

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ARTICLES

Television—New Axes to Grind
South Africa, I Presume!
This Propaganda Question
Theme for Peace
Death Always Wins
Celluloid Trumpet Blasts
Does Historical Accuracy Matter?
Meet Pete-Roleum

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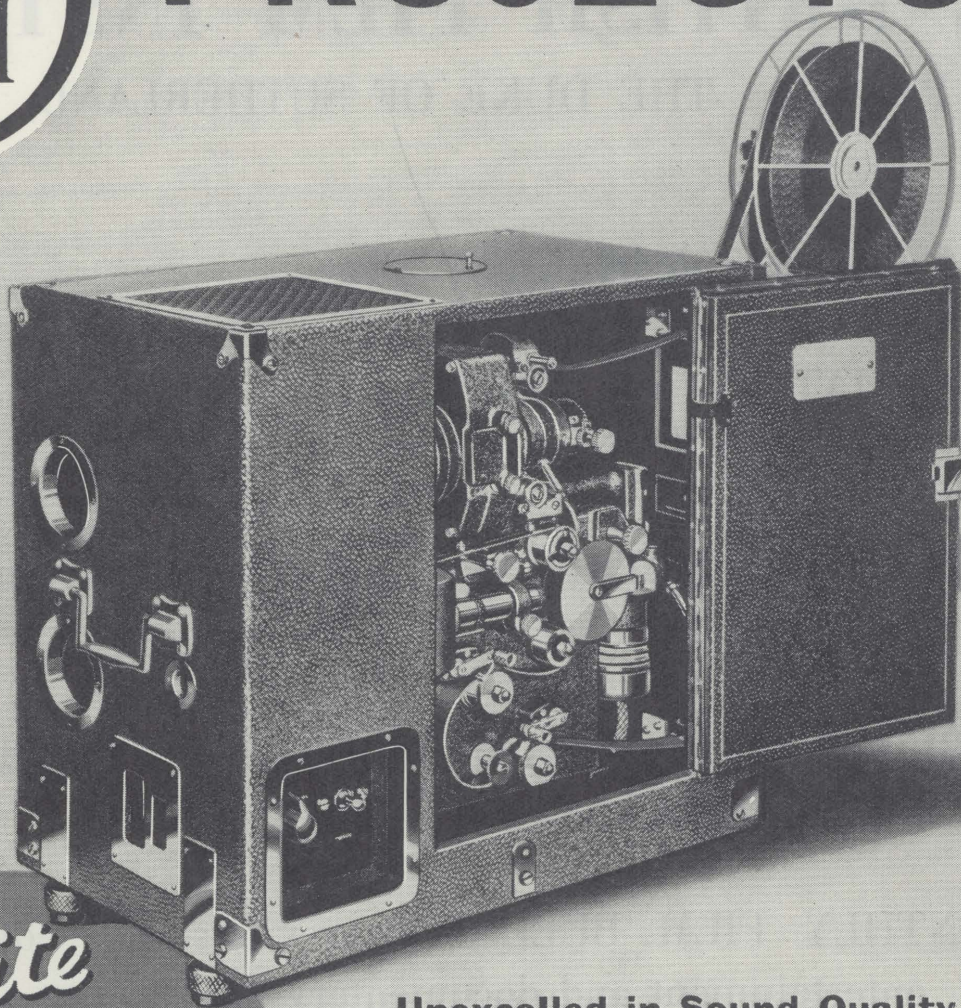


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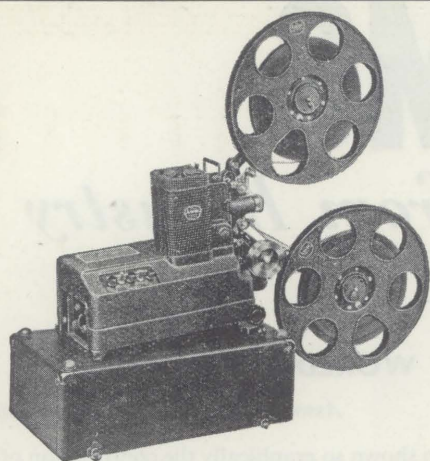
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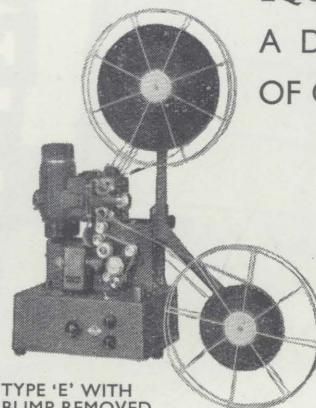
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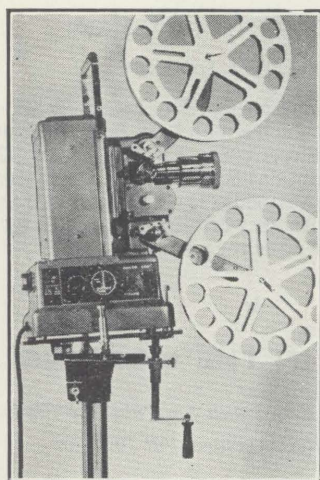
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TO READERS

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CHILDREN AND THE CINEMA

"The gap between the practice of censorship and modern knowledge of child psychology is serious", writes WILLIAM FARR in his review of an important new book below. Certainly one of the most pressing problems facing the cinema industry to-day is that of five million children who go to the pictures each week in this country alone

FIVE MILLION children aged 5 to 15 go to the cinema regularly in this country. Most of them go once a week, a large number go more often. Most of the million and a quarter who do not go regularly live in rural districts where there are no cinemas within easy reach. Many children below the age of 5 are taken to the cinema by parents, brothers and sisters. These estimates are taken from Mr. Ford's *Children in the Cinema*,* the first book on this subject to be published in this country. Few people will be surprised by these figures; and his opinion that ordinary film programmes are generally unsuitable for children will not be disputed by anyone who has given much attention to the subject. At special matinees for children efforts are made to present programmes of films that are really suitable for children. Mr. Ford estimates that about 700 cinemas organise children's matinees and that they are attended by about 500,000 children a week. The organisation of children's

matinees represents the only effort being made in this country to provide film entertainment that children can enjoy wholeheartedly and that is free from anything that will disturb children. Only 1 cinema in 7 organises children's matinees; only 1 child in 10 attends them.

"The fact that children believe implicitly what they see", says Mr. Ford, "puts a serious responsibility on those who provide films for their entertainment". It does, but not only on them. Parents, teachers, social and religious leaders, indeed all of us share that responsibility. Mr. Ford's book should reawaken interest in this important subject; it should also ensure that any future discussion and action, whether among educationists or inside the film industry, will be more informed and more realistic. Mr. Ford has ably collated the opinions and experiences of those with expert knowledge of children and films for children and to this he has added particular knowledge that he has acquired in running the largest and most efficiently organised group of children's matinees.

* *Children and the Cinema*. By Richard Ford. George Allen and Unwin. 7s. 6d.

As a result of surveys, conferences and experiments in which educationists, psychologists and cinema managers have taken part we have reached to-day a fair degree of agreement on fundamental matters. Mr. Ford clearly shows this. But reforms and improvements are still slow to follow. We know, for example, that children can easily be frightened by films and that such fright often causes nightmares. This is undesirable. Recently the British Board of Film Censors introduced a third category of films—the “Horrific” or “H” class into which they have placed a number of films like “Frankenstein” and “Dracula” and more recently some less obviously horrific films. Children under 16 may not be admitted to see such films even if they are accompanied by adults. For years people had been drawing attention to the frightening effects of some Disney cartoons. At last the B.B.F.C. took notice and gave an “A” certificate to *Snow White*. But although this decision was endorsed by most of the leading film critics and many experienced child psychologists, as Mr. Ford shows, most local authorities reversed it and licensed *Snow White* for universal showing. Again, we know that love scenes and complicated relationships between adult members of the sexes bore children or are not understood by them; we know, too, that children concentrate on the pictures and only attend to and comprehend the simplest dialogue, and then only in patches. But in their determination to safeguard the morals of the young the B.B.F.C. classes many a film as “A” on account of scenes which only adolescents and adults would understand. Some of these films are otherwise excellent for children. I have in mind a British film featuring a well-known comedian which would have been a godsend to organisers of children’s matinees who find it so difficult to get suitable comedies. But it was given an “A” certificate for no apparent reason other than certain lines of dialogue, the double intent of which was so hidden as almost to escape an adult audience. Similarly adventure films in which there is a woman of a certain character (always discreetly hinted at) earn an “A” certificate unnecessarily from the point of view of children while a “U” film of unblemished virtue may contain a long-drawn-out death-bed scene that may be exceedingly harrowing for children. The decision whether to give an “A” or a “U” certificate is admittedly difficult; but both the B.B.F.C. and the licensing authorities make their work more difficult in the first place by adhering, quite arbitrarily, to the age of 16 as the dividing line—all psychologists agree that adolescence, with a new set of problems, has begun by then for most people—and, in the second place by excluding from their deliberations teachers and psychologists whose job it is to know about children.

This gap between the practice of censorship and modern knowledge of child psychology is serious, especially for the cinemas that try to cater for family audiences or that run children’s matinees. Finding suitable films is, as Mr. Ford

shows, the most difficult problem in organising children’s matinees. There are plenty of Westerns but only a few straight adventure films and more serious, very few comedies. On the Film Institute’s ranking in its *Monthly Bulletin* only about one “U” film out of nine is positively suitable for children. Most of the rest are innocuous enough, but are not entertaining for children. On the other hand there are “A” films which are innocuous for children under 14 (while they may be undesirable for adolescents of 14 to 16) and also contain just the elements of adventure or comedy that children enjoy. There are other “A” films that with small cuts could be turned into “U” films. At the Film Institute’s Conference of 1936 members of the film trade suggested that renters should be asked whether they could not help increase the supply of films for children by making such cuts after the films had finished their ordinary run. Although this may be difficult it represents the only way of getting more films for children. Production, unless heavily subsidised by some philanthropist, is out of the question.

The film industry is run primarily for adults. Children of 5 to 15 represent only 15 per cent of the population; at the box-offices of the cinemas they represent even less, in terms of what they pay for a seat. Ideally films would be produced specially for children and cinemas run exclusively for them. As things are this is an ideal not likely to be realised for some time. So much more is the pity. If films were produced for children the cinema could play an important part in the education of the children; and I do not mean by this that the films would be “educational” or “uplifting”. Mr. Ford can show that there are no grounds for the accusation that the cinema is the cause of juvenile delinquency. What one would like to be able to show is that the cinema is playing its full part in promoting the emotional and mental development of children. Mr. Ford does, however, show that it is possible to provide better film entertainment for children at performances specially organised for them than can be provided at performances organised for adults and attended by children. His account of the way in which the matinees with which he is associated are run is not the least interesting part of his book. He gives details of the regulations which must be observed; the kind of programmes which are presented; and the way in which audiences are organised, maintained at an economic level, and controlled while they are in the cinema. Cinemas which run children’s matinees take on heavy responsibilities and it is clear that this group of cinemas, at least, is fully aware of them. This account—and my own observations in a number of the cinemas—leaves me with little doubt that the children enjoy themselves. If this, at least, is to be achieved, not for 1 child out of 10, but for most children, the only way is through more children’s matinees. That, at least, is my conclusion after reading this book.

THIS PROPAGANDA QUESTION

is causing a lot of furrowed brows these days. On the one hand stand the crusading enthusiasts with their causes "which it is in the public interest for the people to understand and support." On the other side are those who feel that film propaganda in any form is out of place. Among the latter is MARTIN QUIGLEY, President of one of the largest groups of film trade journals in the world. Below he states his views.



Confessions of a Nazi Spy

First National

ON A TORRID August day in the summer of 1937, your correspondent found himself confronted with the not altogether benign countenances of a few hundred persons in attendance at a forum of the Williamstown Institute of Human Relations, held at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

His predicament was due, in part, at least, to one of those lethargic moments, not uncommon in the lives of some, when an adequately sounding excuse for non-acceptance of an invitation to speak did not come quickly enough. As a result, as above noted, he found himself entering upon the presentation of a viewpoint which, with respect to this particular audience, he well knew would be received with but little favour.

The audience consisted largely of persons with an abundance of confidence in their plans for the New Social Order. These plans, the speaker knew, contemplated especially designs upon the motion picture and its functions, with which he was by no means in agreement. But it so happened that the contrary viewpoint was the sole one which he felt inclined to dwell upon on that occasion.

He proceeded to do so, to the end that had it been an environment only somewhat less pervaded with academic decor the propagandist for no propaganda in the entertainment film might have found it necessary to depend for bodily safety upon the ministrations of the constabulary.

He felt that what was to be said needed to be said. Moreover, he especially felt that it needed to be said to this particular audience.

The national press reactions to the discussion were considerably more pointed and extensive than might have been expected. Almost without exception, they supported the speaker's viewpoint. This served, perhaps quite naturally, to incense rather than to mollify those who wish to enlist the entertainment film in pursuits of political, social and economic propaganda. And so the controversy has gone on apace.

The viewpoint expressed by the speaker was in no sense an innovation in his habitual discussion of motion pictures. In the motion picture trade journals which he edits an identical viewpoint had been consistently expressed for a period of nearly twenty years. During those many years, few dissenting voices were raised. Only of relatively recent date has there appeared anything in the way of organized and widespread effort to dragoon the entertainment film into fields outside of its elected province.

In the course of the present controversy, your correspondent's opponents have drifted considerably from the record, attributing assertions which have not been made, answering arguments which have not been presented and generally creating strawmen which they have proceeded energetically to demolish. Meanwhile, those who are not

patently in the service of political radicalism have left at least this studious observer considerably in the dark as to what their real position, if any, happens to be.

There is, for instance, Mr. Walter Wanger, who on a recent barnstorming expedition to New York made many speeches and gave many interviews. In all of which he assailed with considerable vehemence, it must be admitted, your correspondent's position. Or, rather, that which he alleges to be your correspondent's position. He said that the industry has listened long enough to this moss-backed reactionary; that now the American motion picture must proceed to deal realistically with the vital problems of the day; that the film must be used to make the world safe for democracy, or words to that effect. Also, that Hollywood product has become humdrum and routine because of restrictions of the Production Code.

Incidentally, it must be observed, one's pride of authorship relative to the Production Code was somewhat outraged when it was discovered that Mr. Wanger, who has long been a signatory to the document, was so grossly unaware of its provisions that he did not know that he is perfectly free under the Code to do those things which he claims the Code prevents him from doing.

Mr. Wanger and others dispose of that whole part of the controversy which comes under the heading of "propaganda" by saying, in effect, that everything is propaganda—"whatever one writes, or does or says is propaganda for something—so what?"

It is distinctly not your correspondent's opinion that the contemporaneous film should avoid contemporaneous subject matter. It would be a matter of considerable satisfaction to see motion pictures, including those produced under the guidance of Mr. Wanger, deal more realistically, truthfully and faithfully with subjects of timely, vital interest. It is absurd to imagine any person of intelligence contending against patriotic subjects which, if well done, have always been good theatre.

What, then, is the argument all about?

To those sufficiently well-informed to be entitled to a role in the argument it is this:

Whether it is either right or permissible to use the entertainment motion picture, presented in the customary places of amusement, for the purpose of propagating political, social and economic ideas, theories and what-not.

My position is that the entertainment industry enjoys no monopoly of the motion picture medium. Facilities for production are commonly available. If anyone wishes to produce any kind of a motion picture, and if he is capable of assembling the necessary facilities, there is nothing to prevent him from so doing.

But to me it sounds like exceedingly high-handed procedure for anyone to come along and say, "Look here, you—the American motion picture industry—have succeeded, by dint of considerable time, effort and money, in assembling

in these United States a public to the number of about twelve million, who come daily to motion picture theatres in search of entertainment, relaxation and diversion. . . .

"I've got some ideas which I want to slip over on these people while they are in an unsuspecting mood, while they are relaxed and off-guard in their comfortable opera chairs. Of course, I am not going to tell them that, by means of a dramatic story, carrying with it an appeal to their emotions rather than to their reason, I intend to operate on their political beliefs; but that's really what I am up to. I want to use for my own theories, which I must admit have yet to have their correctness demonstrated, the charm, allure, fascination of the motion picture medium—not, of course, in a lecture hall but in a theatre."

To the person with such a proposal I would say, "Go get a camera, make your picture and then hire a hall. Do not ask me to be party to what looks to me like plain, dishonest procedure. My audience comes to my theatre, pays the required admission price and expects to be entertained. I have no objection to a film which deals realistically and faithfully with subjects of contemporary interest, but I want only the film which is intended primarily as an entertainment and does not seek covertly to persuade an audience to the acceptance of a political theory. This business of attempting surreptitiously to inoculate a public with ideas that someone thinks or says would be good for them looks to me like the tactics of the totalitarian and not the democratic state."

This question has not gone on without its quota of muddle-headed thinking. But it is not that alone which accounts for the present measure of confusion. The screen has long been regarded by the disciples of the late Mr. Lenin, of Moscow, as an instrument essential to their purposes. A few years have passed since His Excellency, Maxim Litvinoff, recently of the Soviet Foreign Office, declared in an address in Belgium that "The cinema is the most desirable and the most effective means for advancing the Revolution."

The degree of the prevailing confusion has been heightened by the attentions of Leftist propagandists who, in pursuit of their orthodox methods, have succeeded in bringing to their support many uninformed persons. These persons have been appealed to on the grounds that the film in any conscientious discharge of its responsibility, must join the fight for a better world, for the defence of democracy; must enlist in the struggle to down Nazism and Fascism. All about us here may be viewed the pitiful spectacle of persons who should know better but still have allowed themselves to be used as tools for the accomplishment of purposes from which they would recoil in horror if they really knew their essential character.

The obvious threat of the corruption of the entertainment screen by political, social and economic propaganda receives here many and varied reactions. Perhaps none is quite so

comforting and reassuring—if it can be accepted—as that proposed in his recent annual report by Mr. Will H. Hays, president of the American industry association, who just lets the whole matter drop, indicating a belief that the only argument current is whether or not the screen shall deal with contemporaneous subject matter. To this question he answers, reassuringly, yes and no.

To those who say that everything is propaganda, and so why bother about it, we would answer that in any sensible interpretation for the purposes of this discussion propaganda means the subtle, covert masking of argument that is aside and apart from any legitimate dramatic purposes, and to which dramatic purposes are subordinated in an effort to cause a public unwittingly to accept certain conclusions.

If such procedure in any reasonable way fits under the heading of democratic processes, then your correspondent remains woefully uninstructed. To him it seems to comprise the formula of the tyrant.

There seems to me little doubt that the entertainment film stands in serious jeopardy because of the designs upon it that are entertained in many quarters. If it becomes a

propagandist for right, left or centre it will sacrifice a public goodwill that is its greatest asset. It will find its vast audience split into segments, with approval for a particular film issuing only from that segment to whose political ideas it caters. Its days as the most popular form of amusement for virtually the whole public will be ended.

If its dramatic and artistic purposes are subordinated to propaganda objectives, we may expect only a disheartening retrogression. The film under the dictatorships has fallen to its present low estate because there has been laid upon it the lethal hand of propaganda.

By all means keep the motion picture attuned to the tempo of the day. Let it deal with the vibrant topics of the times, honestly and realistically, but let the treatment and the purposes be of legitimate, dramatic intent. Let not the entertainment film, produced for and exhibited in places of amusement, be corrupted into a stealthy, mischievous and potentially dishonest agency.

There exists to-day no means more potent for influencing public opinion than the motion picture. This fact has not escaped those who would destroy the heritages of western civilisation.



DATEs AND DRESSES

Blame the women for most of the inaccuracies in historical films, says
JAMES LAVER

THE THEATRE WAS for long the home of the anachronism. Shakespeare's Romans plucked open their doublets, Macbeth wore trunk hose, which was not perhaps so astonishing as Garrick's practice of playing the part in the King's livery of scarlet faced with gold. Quin's Coriolanus wore a full-bottomed wig and Mrs. Yates's Electra a high, powdered headdress. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, theatrical producers had learned a little more about the costumes and manners of scenes remote in place and time, but even then historical accuracy was very seldom attained, as can be readily seen from contemporary portraits of actors and actresses in character.

The film in its early days took over many theatrical conventions, including flat, painted scenery, which it has since shed, but when we see some of the early films again after a lapse of years, they astonish us not only by the wildly melodramatic gestures of the actors but by their ludicrous blunders in scenery and dress. It was soon realised, however, that the screen is of all mediums the most *actual*. There is an inevitable element of the "document" about photography even in the hands of the most imaginative cameraman, and liberties which still seem permissible on the stage seem much less so in the film. A serious attempt was made, by the employment of art directors, historical experts and the like, to reduce the possibilities of error to a minimum. For such a film as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* an immense amount of research was undertaken and every effort made to "get everything right." Was it worth it? Did the public care?

It is, of course, true that the greater part of the film-going public would have been quite unable to distinguish between early and late sixteenth-century costume. There is a blessed imaginary style, called Tudorbethan, which covers a multitude of inaccuracies, but there is always a proportion of film-goers "period-conscious" enough to detect glaring errors, and this educated minority has an influence far greater than its numbers might seem to warrant. And we must also remember that it is constantly growing. Even the popular magazines have articles on "period" furniture, an increasing number of "great houses" are open to the public and, in schools, the teaching of history is much more pictorial than it was a generation ago. Cheap illustrated books—school books and others—have shown everyone what Henry VIII looked like, and it is no longer possible, as it would have been in the early nineteenth century, to present the Black Prince in a slashed doublet, or Sir Walter Raleigh in a pair of Charles II riding boots.

This is all to the good. Part at least of the pleasure in seeing an historical film lies in its power of evoking a past epoch, without constant reminders that the whole thing is only a charade. Some astonishing bloomers are, of course, still made. There was an otherwise effective scene in the earlier Du Barry film which showed Louis XV reviewing his troops and pulling out of his pocket, with his handkerchief, a lady's stocking. But the troops wore, instead of three-cornered hats, the ugly shako of the Napoleonic period. How many people noticed it? Not many, perhaps, but it would have been quite easy to get the uniform right.

The film producer, striving after historical accuracy, will have most difficulty with the women. No actress will willingly wear an unbecoming dress, and by a becoming dress she means one which, in however subtle a way, has some hint of contemporary fashion. Last-minute adjustments are capable of transforming an accurate historical dress in the most astonishing fashion with the result that in a few years' time the flavour of the year in which it was worn is just as obvious as the flavour of the year it was supposed to represent. This may seem an astonishing statement but can easily be borne out by "stills" of past productions. And this deforming influence of the contemporary mode is even more obvious in the feminine coiffure. It is almost always possible to date a photograph of a theatrical or film production by the women's hair. Even in *Henry VIII*, only Miss Lanchester as Anne of Cleves had the courage to be really sixteenth century in her style of hair-dressing.

There is, however, a danger on the other side. It is quite possible to be buried under the minutiae of historical reconstruction. The designer for films should not be a mere encyclopædia of detail; he should be an artist, and art—it has been well said—is essentially "exaggeration apropos." In other words, he should be able to see the essentials of a period, to pick them out and to exaggerate them, even at the risk of falsifying some detail that the historical expert can pick out at a glance. Every epoch has its distinctive line, and if this is ignored or misunderstood it is possible to be able to show chapter and verse for every knife and fork and gaiter-button and yet to falsify the entire picture. It is also possible with much less knowledge, or with knowledge better under control, to accomplish a real reconstruction of some historical event which will convince everyone, but the pettifogging pedant, of its essential truth.

Historical accuracy matters very much in films, not only in films which are labelled historical. The collective knowledge of the film public is prodigious, and is growing more formidable every year. It is bad business to spoil anybody's pleasure by presenting him with the one error that he is able to detect. Consult the experts, by all means. Their aid is readily available, and in the matter of historical accuracy, a great Museum like the Victoria and Albert lays itself out to give all the help it can. But when all the information is collected, the producer must ignore some elements and emphasise others if the film is to become no "museum piece" but a work of art.



Queen Elizabeth, 1912
(Sarah Bernhardt in *Queen Elizabeth*)

Mary Queen of Scots, 1936
(Katherine Hepburn in *Mary of Scotland*)



Queen Elizabeth, 1937
(Flora Robson in *Fire Over England*)

Jane Seymour, 1933
(Wendy Barrie in *The Private Life of Henry VIII*)



"Almost always possible to date . . ."



"The population increased"

BELLS ET CETERA

Some advice to those who are setting up documentary film production groups overseas, particularly in Paris and New York. The professor is RUSSELL FERGUSON

YOU WHO HAVE SET up documentary film production groups in Paris and New York are only beginning, and you have everything to learn. We in London know all there is to know on the subject. Let us formulate some of our knowledge for your benefit.

As a convenient way of showing you how to set about the making of documentary films, I have chosen a few subjects at random, and I propose to offer you a treatment which will indicate how we in London would tackle them. I may, perhaps, add a few general observations at the end, but this is not strictly necessary, since by the time you have read these specimen treatments I am sure you will have got the hang of the thing and will be able to go ahead on the right lines.

BELLS

From time immemorial men have devised means of attracting attention. We first hear of bells in very early times. These small bells in the British Museum were used by the ancient Romans. Bells became associated with the Christian Church, and the Mohammedans refused to use them as a call to worship, substituting the muezzin, or call to prayers.

In the Middle Ages, many huge bells were made, often very beautiful. Great Tom, Long John, Old Parr, and perhaps the most famous of all, the Great Bell of Moscow, which has a piece out of it.

With the Industrial Revolution, the population increased. Great towns sprang up. Thousands of people could not hear the church bells in the morning.

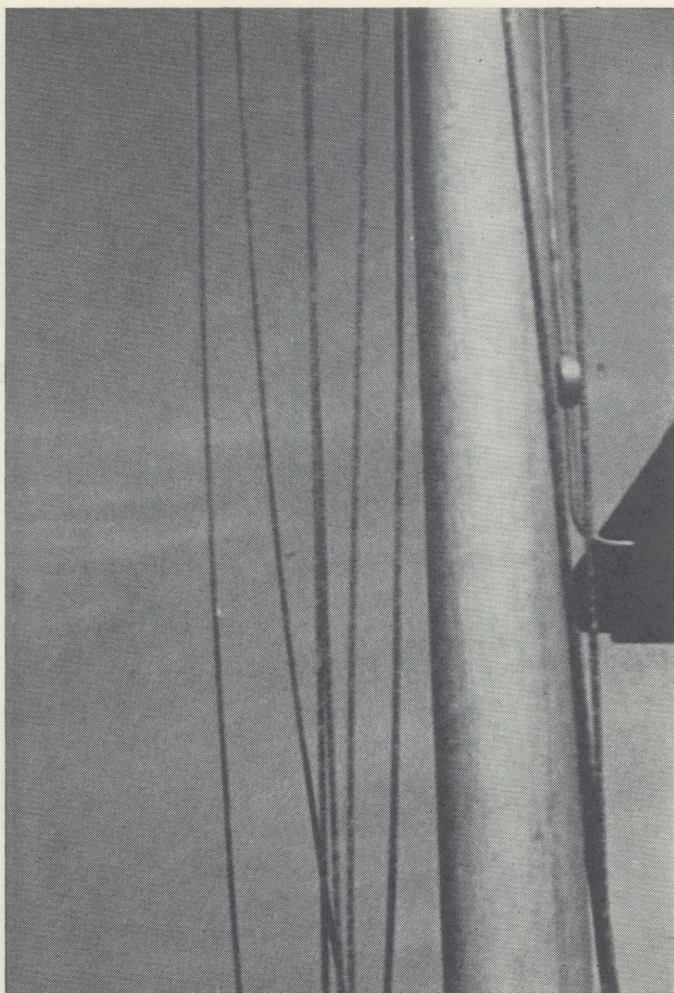
Behind all this lay a great social problem. Our whole life depends on work. How were the masses of people to get up in the morning to go to work?

The scientist stepped in. Working night and day, he took the bells into the laboratory, broke them up, melted them down, and invented new alarm clocks on a new principle. But conditions got worse instead of better. With the pressure of industrial conditions the people were forced to set their alarms for such an early hour that they hardly got any sleep at all. In some of the worst cases, workers had to get up yesterday evening. As hours lengthened, wages dropped. Those who had no work to go to were no better off, because they starved. Unemployment increased. It was clear that the solution to the problem was more work and less OF it.

The trade unions stepped in. The employers stepped in. The Government stepped in. Everybody stepped in.

To-day, great progress is being made in all directions. Employment is increasing. So is unemployment.

Much has been done, but much remains to be done. We must all work together for democracy.



"Behind all this lay a great social problem"

SIGNPOSTS

From time immemorial men have devised means of showing the way to this place or that. We first hear of signposts in very early times. This signpost, now in the British Museum, was used by the ancient Romans. The first signpost was undoubtedly the hand with outstretched finger. This shape survives on signposts even at the present day.

In the Middle Ages, signposts took the form of stones with names carved on them, often very beautiful.

With the Industrial Revolution, the population increased. Great towns sprang up. Roads were built in all directions. Signposts lagged behind.

Behind all this lay a great social problem. Our whole life depends on roads. How were the masses of people to get from place to place, carrying the raw materials and finished products of industry, without signposts to show the way?

The scientist stepped in. Working night and day, with theodolites and things, he made maps of the whole country. He found out where all the roads went to, and designed new signposts on new principles. But conditions got worse instead of better. So many people knew the way that road accidents became very plentiful.

The A.A. stepped in. The R.A.C. stepped in. The L.C.C.

stepped in. The Government stepped in. Everybody stepped in.

To-day, great progress has been made in all directions. Road safety is increasing. So is the number of accidents.

Much has been done, but much remains to be done. We must all work together for democracy.

DUSTBINS

From time immemorial men have devised places to put their rubbish. We first hear of dustbins in very early times. The ancient Romans used them. The vases and other receptacles in the British Museum have all been used as dustbins at one time or another.

In the Middle Ages, the art of disposal was largely forgotten. People threw their refuse out of the window. The cry of Gardy Loo (Gardez l'eau) was heard in the streets of Edinburgh until quite recently.

With the Industrial Revolution, the population increased. Great towns sprang up. Dustbins were not enough. When they were emptied, the rubbish accumulated in all directions.

Behind all this lay a great social problem. Our whole life depends on health. How were the masses of the people to be kept healthy, with all this rubbish lying about?

The scientist stepped in. Working night and day, he devised means of making rubbish heaps into football grounds. But conditions got worse instead of better. As the death rate was brought down, the population got bigger and bigger and the rubbish got more and more plentiful. Indeed the vast crowds left the football grounds in such a state that in many cases the scientists had to start all over again.

The Urban District Councils stepped in. The Sanitary Authorities stepped in. The Corporations stepped in. The Police stepped in. The Government stepped in. Everybody stepped in.

To-day, great progress has been made in all directions. Public health is increasing. So is the rubbish.

Much has been done, but much remains to be done. We must all work together for democracy.

SPACE, TIME, WORLD CIVILISATION, FOOD, TREES, CHILDREN, DEMOCRACY, MOTOR-CARS, OIL PAINTINGS, ETC.

. . . time immemorial, Middle Ages, Indust. Rev., soc. prob., whole life depends, scientist, conditions worse, Govt., progress, much done, much remains.

General observations: In constructing documentary films in the shape of the above (a shape which has served us, with slight modifications, for many years) you workers in other countries would do well to bear certain considerations in mind. Some of these I shall now set down for your guidance.

(1) Be careful to have different photographs to illustrate different films. There will be a strong temptation, for instance, to use the same factory shots over and over again

for the Industrial Revolution portion of various films. This temptation must be resisted, for if you give way it may well result in all your films being exactly the same.

(2) If you cannot think what picture to put with any particular part of the film, you will generally find it useful to use a piece of landscape. A landscape is good for "The Government stepped in," but it is equally good for "conditions got worse instead of better," or for "the population was increasing."

(3) There may be difficulties in finding a great social problem to go with certain of your subjects. In such cases, substitute "behind all this lies a great organisation", which will lead you into a sort of mixture of shots of men working, known as a "soup", which is always very good. You may make a similar soup for your scientists if you like.

(4) In general, you can practise finding great social problems in your spare time. If for instance, you see a little child playing with soap bubbles, and looking as happy as an angel, stop and say to yourself "Behind that child is a great social problem." It is there, you know, if you can only think of it. Do the same when you see bees among flowers, or beves of laughing young girls, or breezes in the corn, or horses at the gallop, or any of the other things that ordinary people are content to accept as the blessings of life.

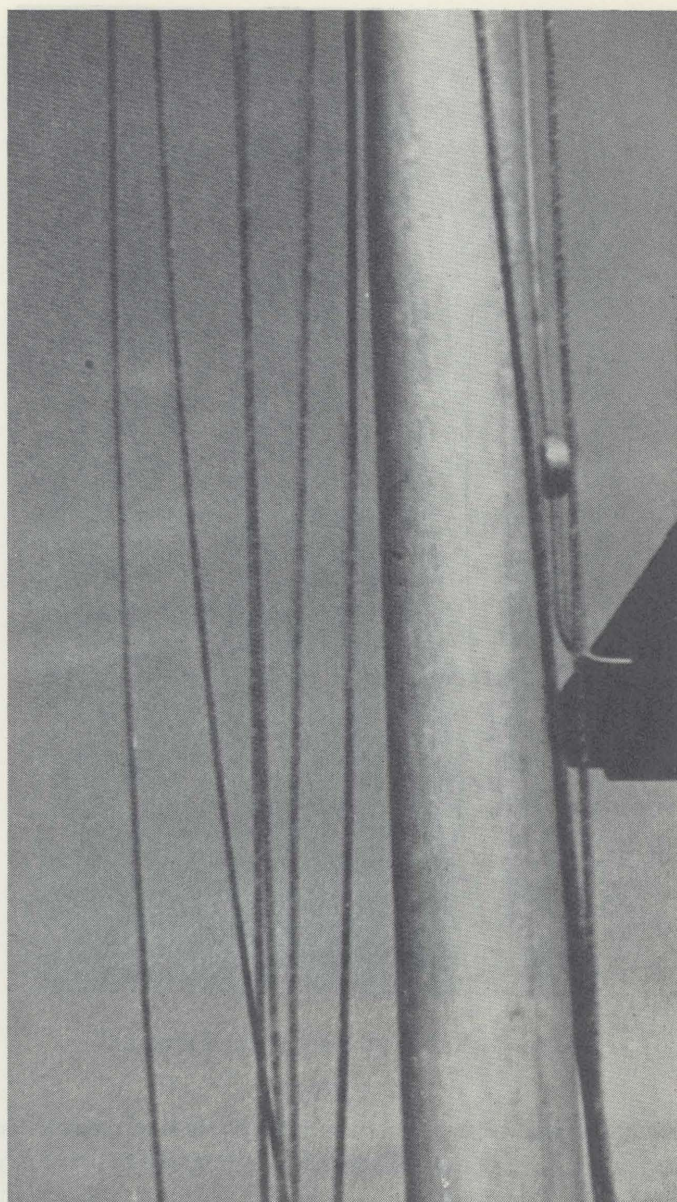
These things may have a certain pictorial value. But what counts in Documentary is *breadth*. When you see the wind in the corn, ask yourself how many acres are under corn, and how many are under pasture. Think of the whole country. When you see a pretty girl, think of the whole population. If she smiles at you, think of some statistics, quick. When you see galloping horses, think of motor-cars.

In time you will realise that there are great social problems behind everything. A few pages of German philosophy read last thing at night before turning in will assist your development.

(5) Of the actual making of the film, I haven't space to tell you much, but once you start work you will learn all about it in the course of a day or two.

You may find that when it is nearly done the film is stodgy and heavy, even though the subject itself is completely fascinating—say *THE GOLD STANDARD*. The remedy for this is a very simple one. Use plenty of "opticals". These include mixes, wipes, soups, fades and dissolves. By the time you know the meaning of these terms you can call yourself a director without fear of contradiction. I explained "soup"—some people spell it "supe," but that is more or less an affectation. "Opticals" enable you to show two things at once and generally play around. They are quite easy—you just order them from the printer. On the other hand, they cost a lot of money, but the money is well spent if it makes the film less boring. In making documentaries, opticals are half the battle.

(6) Then there is the music and commentary. The rules here are simple. If the commentary is not very good, drown



"The Government stepped in"

it with music. If the music is not very good, drown it with commentary. If neither is very good, drown them both with each other. Be careful to use very loud title-music and end-music. The public will be so impressed that they will scarcely notice what comes in between the title and the end.

(7) Finally—in the treatment of your films, *avoid monotony*. It need not *always* be the ancient Romans. Sometimes it can be the ancient Greeks. Similarly, you do not need to keep dragging in the British Museum all the time. Make it the Bodleian occasionally. You will find that a sequence of maps at some part or other in your films will help to give variety. Not every film of course. Say, two films in every three.

Well, I think that is all I have space for. Before I finish, however, let me once again emphasise the last point. Avoid monotony. People get very tired of seeing the same thing over and over again.

SOUTH AFRICA,

I PRESUME!

... being an account of the film industry in South Africa, and of an attempt to bring to British Screens a few grains of enlightenment concerning this most unpublicised Dominion by the production of documentary films. The author is
LEON SCHAUDER



Production still from one of the Films

THOUGH HISTORY may be described with dusty adjectives as an excuse for lack of historical knowledge, the indisputable fact remains that the world is criminally ignorant, both historically and contemporarily, of the fundamental matters of interest in South Africa.

The rise of the Cape of Good Hope through the days of the Dutch East India Company to its present status, is covered by the average person in England by the occurrences on approximately the following dates:—

In 14 something Vasco da Gama sailed to the Cape—unintentionally.

1820 The British settlers landed at Algoa Bay and immediately became the backbone of the country.

1903 The Boer War ended before people had found out exactly what it was all about.

1939 South Africa produces much of the world's gold.

1949 South Africa will still be producing gold—they hope!

Condoning, for the sake of space alone, ignorance of what has passed in the upbuilding of South Africa, we arrive at the depressing conclusion that to the man who reads his expressive daily papers in England, South Africa's importance to the world lies in its production of gold, wool, Springboks, wealthy horse-racing financiers—and little else. As to how we live, and where we live: whether the country is dry or verdant: as to our politics and our outlook—the world is painfully ignorant. Though we ourselves are

in many ways to blame for this because of our lack of initiative in pushing ourselves to your notice, a people who can read in a daily London paper a story of a lion walking into Capetown and eating two women, and believe it as faithfully as they believe the political news on the other pages, are surely a people who can only be convinced of the truth by realistic documentary evidence. Only the film is capable of this strong presentation of facts.

When recently an English newspaper commented on the fact that "South Africa is very backward in film production", a gossip writer of a big daily paper in that country hastened "to take exception", although the indictment is quite true.

South Africa presents an amazing picture when viewed from a film point of view. Film production is a virtual monopoly: the same concern controlling most of the showing facilities as well. Up till recently this company produced occasional films, all sponsored, dealing mainly with the scenic attractions of the country, as well as with some of its various industries. The latter subject presents undoubted opportunities, but many films, in fact most of them, were unfortunately injected with that amount of publicity which, though it finds endorsement by the directors of the sponsoring concern, nullifies what entertainment value it might possess. They therefore seldom reached this country and were merely shown on the circuit controlled by the monopoly in South Africa. But South Africa is a vast un-

titled documentary field, virtually untouched, rich in material, and with personalities among its people who could well contribute towards putting South Africa on the screens of the world in all its varied aspects. This material awaits the far-sighted South African (or English!) advertiser who realises that publicity can be as effective in a subtle way as it can with direct references to their products. South Africa, as reflected in its few sponsored films, has not yet found this to be the truth, although England has set an admirable example.

Perhaps the British point of view, coming via Wardour Street, is that distance is great, and the inducement to go to South Africa, non-existent. If this is granted, then I blame those concerns in South Africa, both public and governmental, who have not yet realized the force of the documentary films. One cannot detail, though the inclination is strong, but facts remain as evidence of the folly and short-sightedness of these people whose one crime is that their outlook is too South African. With the intention to publicise South Africa they have allowed ulterior motives to influence their methods; and, in one particular instance, intense, but misplaced nationalism has spoiled an admirable attempt to film South Africa by injecting the film with politics, and thus placing unwanted and uninteresting themes before an audience which demands that the other and more varied side of South Africa should be shown. And here too is reflected an inclination on the part of the publicity concerns in the country to cater more for South Africa than for the world. Concerns to-day spend thousands of pounds in advising South Africans "to wear more wool"; and while we sweat and swear in the natural heat of the Karoo, from where the wool comes, you in England are neglected: to you the qualities of our wool are inaudibly extolled. Let the winter winds wail, and the rain chill the English bones—as long as South Africans "wear more wool"!

There are various reasons for the lack of interest in the documentary film in South Africa. Perhaps, and this may be the cause of all this ignorance, it is the lacking in our film fare of those films which help you in England to cultivate an appreciation of the documentary film. A documentary is hardly ever to be seen on the South African screen. It is possible that the underrating of our film mentalities by the few renting companies prevents their showing us documentaries. Thus, with no alternatives at all, our film diet lacks an essential ingredient, a vitamin D—for documentary. The result is that we become stolid and regular in our tastes, appreciating the mediocre, tolerating the weak. With no examples to follow, it is understandable, yet nevertheless regrettable, why the South African publicity man has no idea of the potentialities of the film.

Competition was ever an awaker of sleeping dogs. . . . To-day there are healthy signs of new interest. Concerns from America with progressive ideas are feeling their way

throughout the country—with agreeable results, despite all the difficulties which beset such an enterprise which hopes to break a well consolidated monopoly. The day may not be too far distant when, through force of circumstances, people will be forced to utilise the powers and opportunities in their hands to the mutual benefit of themselves and the country as a whole.

It will be obvious that such Empire produced films cannot be made purely for home consumption if they are to be effective. On importation into this country (meaning England) they come under the complex influence of masses of government regulations and official red tape of the particularly unstretching kind. Whatever the ultimate purpose of those regulations are, they do not encourage Empire film production. Perhaps it can be said here that the helpful assistance of the British Film Institute is the one link which keeps the Empire film producer from rushing off to more friendly climes, feeling very unwanted.

Outside of the actual troubles of production, producers of films in the Empire have to cope with other difficulties, which, with all the very best intentions in their ken, are made by those people who otherwise encourage such productions.

The High Commissioners of the different dominions and their different officers always extend the utmost courtesy and help to any who speak of filming their dominions. This is always very welcome and much appreciated by the producer, but when on his return, and after looking at his cost of production, he finds that actually these offices are competing with him in film distribution, he is entitled to wonder whether it is right that the Dominion governments should receive both the publicity from his films, made with his money, and also from those films which are distributed free by different institutions in opposition to him. For it is the policy of the offices of the High Commissioners to present free copies of films they may have to schools and institutes, as a means of publicity. Free shows are given at which these films are presented either in 35 or 16 mm. form: on the other side of the street the producer of Empire shorts has to overcome the natural prejudice of the ordinary exhibitor to the buying of material which is similar to that which is being given away free. Weighed in the balance, it is obvious that the potential audiences who will view the producer's films are of far greater import than those selected ones who will view the free films. Yet it is definite and, I feel, unfair competition, besides being short-sighted in policy. No encouragement is thus given to independent producers to film the Empire when they know that in those fields from where much of their profit must come, particularly the sixteen millimetre field, they have such fierce and unwarranted competition. Since both parties serve the same ends, it should be possible for some understanding to be reached.

It would appear that my original idea of describing actual experiences during production of some films in South Africa has been subjugated to a welter of words dealing with theories. This is so, but it will, perhaps, lend emphasis to what may follow by providing an idea of the canvas background on which the different film subjects were painted.

When the favourable opportunity arose for me to return to what the novelists would, most appropriately here, call my "native land", to produce films for Gaumont-British Instructional I was resolved to bring back to England aspects of the country which are so very typically South African that South Africans themselves pass them by without notice.

With this end in view I proceeded to capture, as faithfully as circumstances would permit, the beauty of the old ox wagon. Though we possess an air service of unsurpassed efficiency and safety, and while our railroads carry the very latest of steam engines, the ox wagon, indomitably drawn by twelve patient animals, still moves along the dusty roads in the service of transport.

The ox wagon finds its place in the very earliest of South African history; and it is an anachronism that it should also find its place in the modern atmosphere of contemporary times. The film is therefore a contrast of these different methods of transport.

The aforementioned South African wool is mainly grown on a vast and arid plateau called the Karoo. Many miles of uncontrolled land lie before the eye, and only little hillocks, outcrops of rock, break the evenness of the dull brown earth. Yet here live, and here flourish, a people whose life and work constitute one of the four wheels of South Africa's economic carriage. Their existence is acknowledged, but their lives and their simple habits are enigmatic to people who know only the clammy contact of the huge and raucous cities. Thus another subject came before the camera. Afrikaans will be heard in this film, I think, for the first time on the English screens in its proper setting. South African music will be its background.

Natives and Africa have been associated since one man could write and another could read. Each traveller who returned with tales of these black people and their primitive ways served to emphasise the ideas concerning these natives which were then becoming popular. They were a dark, beringed, voluble, and very un-English race. They were presumed to be a fierce and uncivilized people, but the world is inclined to forget, in its flushes of national egotism, that these natives too have traditions and history; that their legends, handed down from father to son, reflect the same fluctuating periods of light and shade as does the history of any white civilization.

From the multitudes of stories, and from the pages of even contemporary history books, I chose the story of the National Suicide of the Ama-Xosa tribe. It tells how, in the year 1856, this mighty nation lived on the fertile lands

between the Kei and the Keiskama rivers. It tells of the prophecies of a young girl Nonquassi. She persuaded her people to carry out her commands to kill all their cattle and to burn all their fields in return for a great and wonderful Utopia for the native people. Their inherent belief in witchcraft led them to believe her. The new era would be heralded by a day when the sun would rise in the west, a hurricane would come which would sweep their enemies into the sea, and the graves of the revered departed chiefs would open and they would return to their people leading wonderful cattle and bringing bountiful corn. Thus would the great Utopia for the native people be ushered in.

Moved by her words, her people fell upon their cattle and slew them in their thousands: their fields, rich in harvest, were burnt, and as the smoke drifted it blew lazily over the fevered people of the Xosa tribes celebrating the carrying out of the commands of Nonquassi with wild debauchery.

And the appointed day dawned. It dawned on the pregnant stillness of the deserted kraals. No one ventured forth to meet the resurrected chiefs . . .

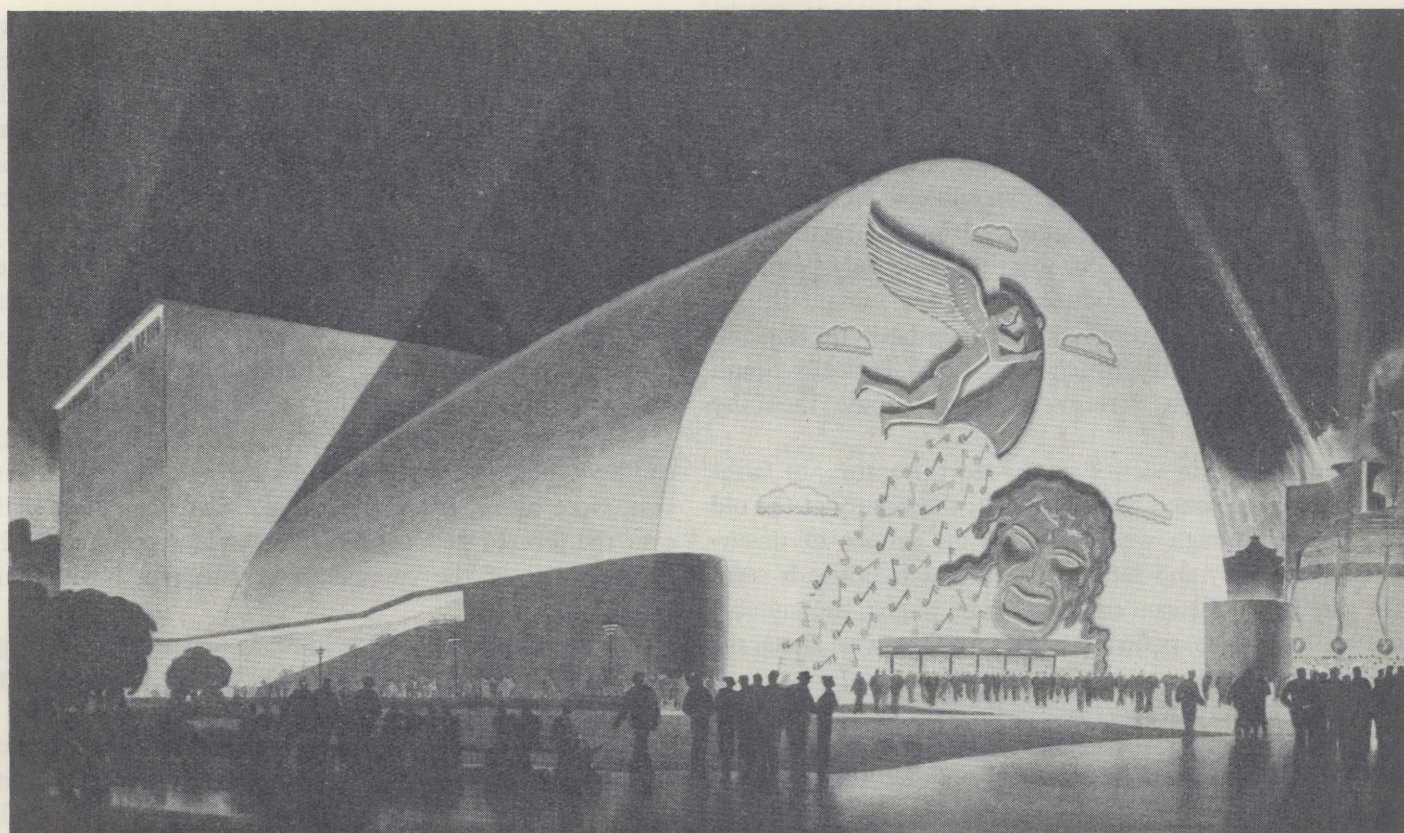
Eager eyes watched the sun as it rose in the east: worried eyes looked towards the unmoving trees, gently playing with a soft breeze: eyes filled with fear saw the graves lie unmoved among the cactus.

Realisation of their position came with tragic suddenness. From the heights of anticipation, they were brought to the depths of despair by the closing of the day. Not a scrap of food was to be found for the slowly starving thousands. Panic reigned where hope before had held supreme. In their terrible plight they turned to their enemies for help. The farmers sent out wagons to carry survivors to the nearest towns where the Government had had stores laid ready for this foreseen emergency. But for every one who struggled to the white man for food, three lay dead in the kraals.

From a nation of over a hundred thousand only thirty-seven thousand survived to be dispersed over the land, a servile and broken people. Nonquassi survived both starvation and retribution from her people, and lived to an old age.

Whether Nonquassi sincerely believed in her fateful prophecies, or whether she was merely the instrument of some scheming native politician history does not tell. Whatever this piece of history may show of the native mentality, it does serve to show to the world that he, too, has a history and tradition.

With all the abundant material in South Africa, and with all the unlimited prospects it offers, is it also an Utopian idea to hope that one day this country will be presented to the world in such a forcible way, that those who to-day view something South African with the words, "South African, I presume!" will turn, and, with knowledge engendered by the screen, will proclaim, "That's South African, I know"?



Design for World's Fair

Courtesy of Thomas Cook and Son

CELLULOID TRUMPET BLASTS

continue to blare against the dictators. But more interesting, to many people, will be the news that an old film produced by Mr. Joseph P. Kennedy, present American Ambassador to Britain, may yet see the light in a shortened form. HERMAN G. WEINBERG writes the article

THE WORLD'S FAIR dominates everything this season, and at least one of the films being shown there dominates most of the fictional American films currently on view. It is a documentary called *The City*, a forty-five minute reportage on city-planning financed by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. A hundred thousand feet of film were shot to get a terse and eloquent four thousand, ten months were spent and some fifty thousand dollars used up in its making. "Year by year", goes the foreword, "our cities grow more complex and less fit for living. The age for rebuilding is here. We must remould our old cities and build new communities better suited to our needs . . ." That will give you an idea. The film is divided into five parts: "In the Beginning—New England", "The Industrial City—City of Smoke", "The Metropolis—Men into Steel", "The Highway—The Endless City", finally, "The Green City". A plea for better housing and intelligent city planning, it becomes extraordinarily vital and touching to all who have lived in cities all their lives without realising the stupid waste of human happiness that characterises American metropolitan life. It fits splendidly with the vision of "The City of Tomorrow" on view in the Perisphere at the Fair—and since the theme of the Fair is "The World of Tomorrow", nothing could be timelier than *The*

City and if you don't see it here this summer, it will be circulating throughout England, no doubt, in the autumn. Mark it down as the third in that brilliant movement so auspiciously begun by *The River* and *The Plow that Broke the Plains*.

Otherwise, the three outstanding films of the season (now that *Pygmalion* is gone) are *Juarez*, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *Wuthering Heights*. *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, has come, of course, and it is one of the most expert transitions of a novel into film that I have ever seen, with Donat playing it with gracious good humour—but *Juarez* and *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* are far more urgent, and *Wuthering Heights* is the most beautiful of them all.

Confessions of a Nazi Spy is based on actual court records of the trial and conviction of a ring of Nazi spies. At last, names are named, the swastika appears and there is even an impersonation of Goebbels. Mr. Streicher's *Der Stürmer* has already attacked the film, which is its first recommendation. Its second one is the cool, clear veracity of its material, the swift and unrelenting script, the direction (by Anatole Litwak—what a side-step from *Mayerling*!) that does not "pull its punches", and the general tone of pamphleteering in a great cause—which is the very first and foremost miracle for Hollywood. The success of the film

has started a cycle of anti-Nazi films in Hollywood, which will be crowned by Chaplin's *Dictator*, for which he may recruit Beatrice Lillie.

Juarez is Warner's second blast at the dictators and a clarion blast it is. Paul Muni plays him with a quiet, smouldering passion and some of the lines he is given to say drop on the ears as does "the gentle dew from heaven" after the hilarious and paranoidiacal broadcasts we have had by short wave from Berlin. Claud Rains' Napoleon III will irk M. Sacha Guitry's royalist feelings (*Champs Elysees*, not content with reviling the French Revolution, whitewashes him to absurdity) and the film may even be banned in France. But *Juarez* will be a great success in Mexico, where it has just opened under the sponsorship of President Cardenas, and that's the important thing. It will also be a big success in America. There is no question as to what the national feeling here is on the subject of dictatorships.

Wuthering Heights pretends, for a moment, that there is no crisis in the world, and there's even room for pretending when the resultant film is as beautiful as this one. Without detracting in the least from William Wyler, it is worthy of Julien Duvivier (which, after *Un Carnet de Bal* and *La Fin du Jour*, I mean to be high praise indeed). Brontë-sticklers will have little to quarrel with—the rest will have a superb piece of craftsmanship to renew their faith in Hollywood again.

But by this time, all three will, no doubt, be making the rounds in the English cinemas, so you will see for yourself. Clearly, this will be America's year in the films, to make up for last year which was one of the most non-productive in the entire history of Hollywood. Even Hitchcock will help to make it so with a film for Selznick, and Nebenzahl, who was responsible for those sterling successes, *Mayerling*, *M*, *Dreigroschenoper*, *Kameradschaft* and *Westfront 1918*, has come to produce here. (I have learned that Duvivier will return to America to do an independently produced film. At the moment, Nebenzahl, who will produce it, is considering Horvath's "The Age of the Fish", an anti-Nazi novel that created a stir here this season.)

As for the rest, Lubitsch will attempt to make a comedienne out of Garbo in *Ninotchka*, after which he will do an old favourite of his, *The Shop Around the Corner*, with Margaret Sullavan. One hopes that somewhere in all this there will be a return by him to the manner of *The Marriage Circle* and *Forbidden Paradise*. King Vidor is doing *Northwest Passage*, a spectacular outdoor film from a best selling novel; Capra will follow up his *Mr. Deeds* success with a similar formula, which is all right too, if it's just as good; and Milestone will do the Steinbeck novel, *Of Mice and Men*.

Steinbeck's new novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is this year's best-seller and is even touted about as "the great American novel" (at last!) will also become a film, with John Ford directing, which is as it should be. From Fritz

Lang there has been no word. And from Reinhold Schuenzel, *Ice Follies*, with the ubiquitous Joan Crawford, has been too much. To think that this came from the creator of the sardonic and poetic *Amphitryon*! (See *Old Wine in a New Bottle* in the previous issue of SIGHT AND SOUND.)

What remains? The cycle of seventy films tracing the development of the films from 1895 to 1932 currently being presented by the Museum of Modern Film Art Library. A magnificent series, despite the inexplicable omission of the entire Soviet contribution to this development. And the news that a certain Mr. Walter Futter has purchased for \$10,000, the negative and script of von Stroheim's last film, *Queen Kelly*, starring Gloria Swanson, which was never released.

The film was never quite finished, Swanson and Stroheim having come to a clashing of temperaments, and the whole thing came at a time when sound was just being introduced to the screen. More than \$800,000 was spent on it while it was before the cameras until United Artists, which was to have released it, called a halt and shelved it. The producer, it will be interesting to note, was none other than Joseph P. Kennedy, our current Ambassador to the Court of St. James. The film was written and directed by Eric von Stroheim and its locale was pre-war Berlin, Africa and Chicago. Having had the opportunity to read portions of the script some years ago, I can say that it was the most cynical story yet devised by Stroheim, brutal, withering and dionysian. It would have made a magnificent motion picture—if there were no censorship of the screen.

What I am getting to, in this halting fashion, is this: Mr. Walter Futter will salvage as much of the original material as is compatible with modern censorship (throwing the glorious Gloria out completely!) and a new story will be written around this footage dealing with "anti-democratic spy activities in a mythical Balkan kingdom."

Once before a similar thing happened, when portions of the "extra footage" shot by Eisenstein in Mexico and not used in *Thunder over Mexico* was sold to another company as backgrounds for Eddie Cantor's *The Kid from Spain*. The films will go down in history as the first art on record that had such a cynical contempt for the creative work of the artist.

Or shall we be grateful to Mr. Futter for giving us even this opportunity to see portions of *Queen Kelly* that otherwise might have remained only as a legend?

Stroheim refused to see *Greed*, after it was cut from twenty reels to ten. "I would as soon see a child of mine on a slab at the morgue as see what they've done to my film", he said.

We can imagine what he would say about the "little Balkan holiday" that Mr. Futter is going to have with his *Queen Kelly*. I am especially curious to see what credit, if any, will be given to Mr. von Stroheim among the credit titles.

THEME FOR PEACE

ANDREW BUCHANAN, interviewed by ARTHUR VESSELO, says that "the most vital need of the day for the screen is the putting forward of a constructive way to peace."

A.B. Hullo! so you've come to ask some official questions?

A.V. Not too official. Perhaps I'd better begin by explaining the general idea. The British film industry's undergone several ups and downs during the last few years. In 1936 it looked perilously like collapsing altogether, but since then, with the aid of a certain element of caution, it's succeeded in branching out again in one or two new directions. In as far as it's made progress, it's been largely because producers have woken up a little to the fact that the wild splashing about of money is more likely to lead to bankruptcy than to the winning of huge markets, and that the comparatively inexpensive, intimate, and carefully-made film about things we know of at first-hand, is ultimately worth more at the box-office than the glittering super-spectacle.

A.B. But there are still many magnates here who have not yet realised that "all is not sold that glitters."

A.V. They're gradually becoming extinct, I hope.

A.B. I wonder.

A.V. One of the most recent tendencies has been the expansion of short-film production in this country—and that's where we felt you come in. We're very interested in the new series, CLOSE-UP, that you're soon releasing, and we wondered if you would give us some of your views on the reels and on the importance of short films generally.

A.B. Hm. . . . I've rather definite views on the production of short films, particularly about the species known as the "Documentary."

A.V. If you could give us a really good definition of the word, a lot of people would be vastly relieved and enlightened.

A.B. I daresay, but it's not really possible. I know a number of "documentalists" who don't know what a documentary film is. The fact is, a "documentary" is a type of picture you know by its examples, rather than by any adequate explanation of what the term's supposed to include—other than pictorial "evidence", of course. We know, for instance, that *Night Mail*, *North Sea*, and so on, are documentary, because they faithfully report actuality and present it dramatically, but that does not mean that every film about trawlers or trains is a documentary. Frequently it's a bore, and merely because a film is devoid of fiction and full of the world's workers, is not to say it is a documentary.

A.V. You're prepared to leave it at that?

A.B. I think so, for it doesn't matter much. What's far more important is that the majority of the big cinema-going public, even though perhaps they may hear a good deal of talk about "documentaries" and short films in one way or another, can't find out what they're like since they rarely get a chance of seeing any from one year's end to another.

A.V. What do you feel is the main reason for such a state of things?

A.B. First, the double feature programme, and, second, that fundamentally, no effort is made by distributors, who rarely specialise in short films, to get them into the public cinemas. This has forced short film producers to seek finance by means of the sponsorship-system, and consequently they don't have to depend on the public box-office at all.

A.V. But wouldn't it be said that independence of the box-office is a good thing?

A.B. Not in this case, for independence of the box-office doesn't mean real independence—the ability to make what one wants, how one wants it, without hindrance—it simply means dependence on something else, which I consider is more difficult than the box-office—that is, the sponsor himself.

A.V. Could you elaborate that?

A.B. Certainly. I don't say that the box-office is necessarily a very exalted test of merit—I'm sure you could quote plenty of arguments against—but at least it is some kind of a direct test of public reaction. And, after all, you won't tell me that the documentary producers are not aiming at public approval, even though concentrating upon shows held in premises other than cinemas. The box-office *is* a rough and ready test of that kind of thing, but the sponsor isn't. The sponsor rarely knows the first thing about films, but always *thinks* he knows what he wants (until he gets it, when he usually changes his mind). He's the worst possible kind of test, but you've got to listen to him, because he puts up the money. Backing publicity or propaganda films, to the sponsor, isn't a full-time job. He's in it only as a side-line, and his real interest is the things his films publicise. As a natural result, dependence on sponsorship means a spasmodic output; and a spasmodic output can't compete with the bigger regular output we're accustomed to in the sphere of the commercial film.

A.V. You wouldn't agree, then, it's clear, with those who claim that the sponsorship-system is opening out a new field of activity for the film?

A.B. Emphatically, no. Of course, there are one or two immediate advantages in not having to worry about whether your film is going to pay for itself when it's shown; but the drawbacks included in the system are much too great. To depend on sponsorship exclusively means you'll never reach fruition as a producer of films suitable for public entertainment, nor can your films reach the biggest public, which is in the cinemas.

A.V. How does your new series fit into the scheme?

A.B. I don't want to say too much at this stage—and in any case you'll soon be seeing the first issues at cinemas. But, first of all, we're *not* in any way dependent on sponsorship, direct or indirect; and, secondly, we are in continuous production. CLOSE-UP is a regularly-appearing series, made and distributed in

the ordinary way for theatrical exhibition at the rate of one a fortnight.

A.V. I see. And what about the purpose behind it? I presume that there's a connecting-thread between the different issues?

A.B. Most certainly. Through all the variety of topics that we're treating and preparing to treat—and the variety is very wide—there runs a central theme, our main objective being to project the life of the nation fairly and squarely in all its aspects, and its relation to the world.

A.V. That's a useful idea, treated in the right way. It seems in line with the spirit of some of the better feature-films we've had since the financial crisis of 1936—films like *Owd Bob*.

A.B. Yes, exactly. But don't confuse our idea with narrow nationalism. I can't state too strongly my personal opposition to jingoistic bigotry of that kind, and we haven't any intention of introducing such an attitude into our films. The projection of a nation, if true, is the projection of human fundamentals, and so rises to the projection of internationalism, and an understanding of all peoples.

A.V. You wouldn't like your work to be thought of as propaganda?

A.B. I have a rooted objection to the word and all that it implies, in view of the masses of propaganda I have seen on the screen which are never acknowledged as propaganda. We are going to take the greatest care not to draw odious comparisons between nations, nor to perpetuate a spirit of hatred born of ignorance. We shall emphasise the principle of peace and co-operation as against war. The type of subjects we shall handle will come from the fields of Drama, Science, Medicine, Industry, Fashion and so on. The playing time of an issue, by the way, is twelve minutes, and one subject will go to each issue.

A.V. It's been suggested to me that your series will be a sort of British *March of Time*. Do you agree with that comparison?

A.B. Definitely, no. I suppose one must make comparisons, and it is a compliment to the *March of Time* that it is always used when talking of any new film venture which seeks to be something more than a newsreel. But here are just three ways in which CLOSE-UP will not resemble the *March of Time*, nor anything else. First, every foot of our material will be new, so that we shall not be re-editing newsreel material for inclusion. Second, we are entirely non-political. Third, we are not dealing with current affairs, save that all fundamental subjects are always current. Another point. The fortnightly items in CLOSE-UP will be intended primarily for entertainment, not for instruction, nor to serve as "news" in any shape or guise.

A.V. You feel that's an important difference between your methods and those of other screen journalists.

A.B. Of course. And also between ours and those of the documentary producers we were talking about before.

A.V. Hm. . . Isn't it perhaps rather a doubtful distinction? I should have thought, myself, that both the *March of Time* and the documentary film could pretty well have been classified under "entertainment"—though personally, I'm not at all clear about the mean-

ing of the word: it seems to me as vague and unsatisfactory as "documentary." But, supposing one accepts it, I should be inclined to say that if a film of the sort we're discussing ever lacks entertainment-value, that's simply because it's defective, not because there's any intention in it not to be entertaining.

A.B. I prefer to make a sharp distinction. Though news comes in a programme of entertainment, it is not primarily entertaining. Instead, it is informative, and supplements the radio news bulletin and the Press. A written editorial is not usually designed to be entertaining. Again, when documentary producers talk about the purpose of their work, they speak, not primarily about entertainment, but about the power of the screen to teach good citizenship, and so on. There is a great difference between entertainment and information, unless you know how to blend the two, and few can.

A.V. Well, that's a point of view. Would you care to give me a short illustration of how one of your issues would be constructed?

A.B. Yes. This photograph of Irene Vanbrugh they've just brought in is out of our issue on the Theatre, which opens with a prologue showing the origins of the drama, and then we merge into Irene Vanbrugh discussing with Maurice Browne the relative values of stage and screen. Following that we go off to study the mammoth revolving stage at the Palladium, and how a modern show is run and electrically controlled. Then there's our film on Medicine, which covers medical progress from prehistoric times until to-morrow.

A.V. That sounds a large order. Now we've got to this point I feel I should ask you a leading question. What do you feel is the most vital need of the day for the screen? You don't have to answer unless you want to.

A.B. I can answer without the slightest hesitation. The most vital need of the day for the screen is the putting forward of a constructive way to peace—peace which can never be created by preparing for war. I mean a full length film of the magnitude of *All Quiet*, but with a peace theme. A film which all British companies might well combine to produce—a sort of 1940 Sermon on the Mount. Its basic message might be: Until one has established peace within oneself, one can never hope for peace in the world—and until nationalism is imbued with so much vision that it becomes internationalism, there must always be a condition of war. This battle for peace demands far greater bravery than the constant clamouring for war. The location of the film should be "anywhere" and it should be released simultaneously in all countries which call themselves civilised.

A.V. You feel strongly about it.

A.B. Very. That is why in my field I lay so much emphasis on the fact that I am not pro-anything, nor anti-anything in the conventional sense of those words, save that I concentrate on the *constructive* things in life. Let me quote you the closing words of my Medical film, which are spoken by an eminent authority: *Medicine knows no national barriers. It unites the peoples of the earth in one high purpose, which is to save and not to destroy.*

MEET PETE-ROLEUM

and the other films now showing at the World's Fair. While San Francisco, not to be outdone, has introduced "smellies" at its Exposition through the enterprise of a coffee firm, according to this article by EZRA GOODMAN

THE WORLD OF TOMORROW, like that of Today, will apparently not be complete without its goodly share of that new-fangled contrivance, the Magic Lantern. At the New York World's Fair, there are more than twenty sizeable motion picture houses, showing a varied assortment of films, ranging from an animated puppet film in Technicolor, *Pete-Roleum and His Cousins*, to a four-reel documentary on housing, *The City*. All in all, approximately 2,000 films are scheduled for eventual exhibition, including foreign and state presentations, sustaining programmes of the Fair administration, and commercials. Two-thirds of the twenty-six American states, as well as the many foreign nations at the Fair plan screenings.

Judging from the present crop of pictures in Grover Whalen's playground, the Film of Tomorrow will range from five to fifty minutes in running time, be exhibited in a streamlined theatre free of charge, and indulge in numerous technical innovations. *Pete-Roleum*, for instance, has unusual sound effects and unique rubber puppets. The Chrysler Motors film, *In Tune with Tomorrow*, displays a third-dimensional system with the audience using polaroid glasses. And *The City* contains some outstanding rapid-fire montages of the hustle and bustle of metropolitan life.

Apparently, the Film of Tomorrow will also have a propagandistic axe to grind, thereby forfeiting all claim to that current state of grace, "pure entertainment". Most of the present films at the Fair are commercial short subjects, plugging everything from biscuits to banana oil. And talking of biscuits, Walt Disney has done his first commercial film for the National Biscuit Company. It is called *Mickey's Surprise Party*, and the climax comes when Mickey saves the day after Minnie has set fire to a slew of crackers.

Hollywood is represented by *Cavalcade of America*, Cecil B. DeMille's production for, and in favour of the film industry. Tracing 150 years of the United States' history, the film is composed of sequences from notable feature pictures, contributed by the Hollywood studios. It is being exhibited in the Fair's Federal Building, which is also showing *The River* and *The Plow that Broke the Plains*.

The Chrysler film, *In Tune with Tomorrow*, is an ingenious record of auto-manufacturing, replete with humour and trick effects. The building of an automobile, part by part, is depicted through the so-called third-dimension system, which adds depth and perspective to the images. Animated springs, radiators and bumpers skip across the screen to the music of Hollywood's Max Steiner.

Among the other films are a finance-company sponsored tale, built around Edgar Guest's poem, *When Father Stokes the Stove*, featuring Mr. Guest as actor as well as poet. There is even one little epic, whipped up by Liberty Magazine, titled *I'll Tell the World*, which is a dramatised ad for Advertising—with a capital A!

Almost all of these films, however, possess the saving grace of subordinating the propaganda to the entertainment value. And the best ones—such as *Cavalcade of America*, *Pete-Roleum* and *The City*—are top-notch amusement reels in their own right, with the advertising practically non-existent.

Reels such as these would be worthy of a moviegoer's attendance even at a regular admission fee.

Pete-Roleum and His Cousins is the creation of Joseph Losey, who originated the *Living Newspaper* technique for the Federal Theatre a few years ago with *Triple-A Plowed Under* and *Injunction Granted*. His cinematic brainchild, produced in Manhattan over the course of a year, is a two-reel fantasy in which all the roles are played by oil drops—a type of character foreign to the well-worn grooves of Hollywood's Central Casting.

These imaginative creatures, who participate in a miniature saga of the history and developments of oil, are represented by more than forty, eight-inch puppets with flexible rubber faces, designed especially for the film by Howard Bay, who recently created the setting for "... one third of a nation ...". More than half a million separate puppet movements were patiently set by an animator and then recorded by stop-action colour camera to achieve the final illusion of motion. The commentary by Hiram Sherman and the music by Hanns Eisler and Oscar Levant were then co-ordinated with the pictorial images. The film also has a unique sound system. There are two separate, interlocking sound tracks, one representing the voices of the screen characters, and the second blaring forth the taunts of an audience heckler from the rear of the auditorium. *Pete-Roleum*, though not entirely successful, is an amusing and imaginative excursion into the rather neglected realm of the animated puppet film.

By far the most interesting American offering presented at the Fair up till now is Oscar Serlin's four-reel documentary, *The City*, an unusual and interesting screen tract on city planning, playing at the Science and Education Building. With an original outline by Pare Lorentz, and commentary by Lewis Mumford, this striking film is one of the outstanding attractions at the Fair and a worthy successor to Lorentz's *River* and *Plow that Broke the Plains*.

In five different sequences, *The City* traces the development of American urban life from the peaceful New England town of yesteryear, to the congestion, confusion and festering slums of the modern metropolis and industrial centre. A solution to these evils is offered in the planned and efficient community of tomorrow, displaying many elements that have already been realised in many parts of the country.

The City is at its best when it depicts the frenzied turmoil of metropolitan life in vibrant and original images. Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, who were previously associated with Lorentz, have in their direction and photography captured the maddening tempo of hurrying crowds, traffic snarls, lunch hour mobs at drugstore counters, the rush hour, and Sunday highway jams. These scenes, at once compassionate and sardonic, are among the most effective documents of city life ever brought to the screen.

Where the picture falls down somewhat is in its final sequences which attempt to indicate the way out in a visionary metropolis. These scenes suffer from an almost Shangri-La prettiness and perfection and leave much to be explained from a purely social or economic viewpoint.



La Bête Humaine

Modern Power

These, however, are slight flaws which do not perceptibly mar the effectiveness of the production. *The City* is a triumph for Civic Films, the producing unit, which worked together with the American Institute of Planners and the Carnegie Corporation, on the picture. Mention should also be made of Aaron Copland's fine score, the narration delivered by Morris Carnovsky, the editing by Theodore Lawrence and Henwar Rodakiewicz's scenario.

In the sphere of government-sponsored documentaries, the British Pavilion is exhibiting in its comfortable little theatre a number of interesting short subjects, including *Roof Tops*, *Monkeys and Apes*, *Americans in England*, *Night Mail* and *North Sea*. Belgium, Switzerland, Russia, Brazil, Cuba and others of the nations represented at the Fair are following suit.

Meanwhile, the San Francisco Exposition, not to be out-

done, is exhibiting some 200 films of its own, many of them in colour, and ranging from travelogues to cartoons and the omnipresent commercials. A film by a building-material firm, for instance, shows wooden puppets erecting and furnishing a house. A coffee firm turns its talkie aromatic by spraying coffee fumes into the theatre at appropriate intervals. An anti-war organisation shows a 1918 battlefield documentary, while the California Mining Exhibit gives continuous performances, with numerous films showing the story of asbestos, aluminum, nickel, etc. A seven-reeler describing the making of steel, caps the show.

Within the next few months, the films at the Fair will be augmented by additional foreign documentaries and domestic contributions. Meanwhile the screen segment of the World of Tomorrow remains one of the most enthralling phases of that giant show.

CONTINUITY

*is made too much of, according to
RICHARD MASSINGHAM. The
author, of course, made that cheerful film
"Tell Me if it Hurts"*

WHEN, RECENTLY, a director of long experience politely suggested to me that I ought to pay a little more attention to continuity, I listened attentively and even politely. Although conscious of an extremely limited knowledge of film making, I was unconvinced.

Any story, whether in a novel, play or film must have, of course, some continuity. That is a commonsense principle. When people always insist on continuity of detail in the entertainment film, I become puzzled. Why is it invariably necessary to reproduce, with absolute exactness, the position of an actor and his background in consecutive shots of a sequence? In the commercial film, continuity of detail is considered so important that a specially trained staff watches every item. It is unthinkable that a man should have his hand in his pocket at the end of one shot and out of it at the start of the next. If he wants to take it out, he must go through the action however unnecessary the movement may be. Nothing must be left to the imagination. This attention to detail has become so rigid as to constitute a law. And like so many laws the letter is more important than the spirit. It is the old story of man is made for the Sabbath, and a film for the Continuity staff.

This inelastic convention is a legacy of the stage. In the theatre there has to be absolute continuity because the audience has a fixed point of view. The film, with its rapidly changing angles, can dispense with this close observance of detail. It can select the important and discard the unessential. Unnecessary action only clogs the development of a film.

The main objections to a break in the tradition is that lack of detailed continuity would interfere with smoothness of production and possibly destroy the illusion of reality. It is said that even slight changes in the positions of the actors or their surroundings would appear jerky and be unpleasant to the eye. But is the technique of film production with its quick changes of angle, so smooth in itself that a slight alteration of the bend of an elbow or the position of a leg would upset its rhythm or balance? If an actor changed his attitude slightly during consecutive shots, would that be more disturbing than an altered camera angle or the sudden insertion of a close-up? Moreover, it is doubtful whether people think they are seeing real people on the screen. They have come to accept Mickey with a male voice and a host of fantastic impossibilities, so that there can be little chance of a slight break of detailed continuity destroying their illusions. Discontinuity must be used as carefully and intelligently as continuity.

It has been suggested that the stage is a superior medium of expression to the film because of the many restrictions that control it. That may or may not be true but it is quite impossible to apply the rules of one form of art to another. It is difficult enough to formulate any binding rules for the film which is still in the embryonic stage of development. It is quite impossible, at the moment, to estimate its

possibilities. It may need some control but to apply the rules of the theatre to a medium which transcends the ordinary limitations of time and space is ridiculous. We recognise the immense possibilities of the screen, and yet we are asked to believe that a medium that can transport you to the ends of the earth in the fraction of a second is unable to stand the strain of an altered position of a limb or a chair.

Even the most orthodox disciple of strict continuity is constantly searching for an excuse to break the law. He uses fades, mixes or wiped dissolves to cover up his tracks. A close-up, one constantly hears, will hide a multitude of sins—as if a close-up is not in itself a jump as disturbing as the so-called discontinuity which it is meant to conceal. And when it is all over and the continuity staff has watched every niggling detail, there must be a few pictures in which an expert could not discover some slight fall from grace. I remember noticing, quite by chance, in a slick American film, the single breasted coat of the hero miraculously becoming double breasted in the following shot. A technical expert sitting beside me never even noticed the change. We can be certain that the great public rarely, if ever, sees these mistakes and certainly never appreciates the care the studios take to spare its powers of observation. And here I believe they are seriously underestimating the intelligence of their audiences. The time may have already arrived when the public will welcome some relief from the banalities of the average production.

In any form of art simple direct expression is always the most successful. Any additional ornamentation must have definite purpose. There should be a ruthless exclusion of all unnecessary trimmings. Over elaboration and unimportant detail only spoils the result. Films are no exception. Yet continuity has become such a fetish that the studios insist on a slavish inclusion of every kind of detail irrespective of whether they are significant or not. This must result in a slowing up of essential movement. Even in the American film—the fastest moving thing on the screen—some at least of the speed is an illusion. There is too much unimportant action—action that is included because the producer is obsessed with detailed continuity.

The law of detailed continuity seems inescapable and has to be applied to all sorts and varieties of films. This universal application has robbed the law of all intelligence. In most sequences it is plainly advisable to have an actor standing on his feet in consecutive shots. But in phantasy it would be perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the film to have him standing on his feet in one shot and on his head in the next. It is impossible to apply the same exacting rules to every film.

This is not a plea for the abolition of all detailed continuity in film making but rather against a too rigid acceptance of what is, after all, only a convention. We should recognise that this attention to detail, while necessary in some sequences, is definitely harmful in others.

It is impossible to lay down any rules about the use of discontinuity. It clearly must serve a definite artistic purpose. Indiscriminate use would be as meaningless as is the present slavish observance of continuity. Discontinuity, if intelligently interpreted, need neither destroy the illusion of reality nor interfere with the smoothness of a production. The film is still in the experimental stage, and must be elastic and not too tied down by over rigid conventions. This is a plea, not for wild unrestraint but for more imagination and freedom for development.

TELEVISION—NEW AXES TO GRIND

It's here—you can't shut your eyes to it. But what will television do with its bright and ever-enlarging screens? LEN LYE argues that it must develop an entirely new technique of its own and shows how this might be done. The photographs are by courtesy of the G.P.O. Film Unit

"The revolutionary idea about television is that the medium has been developed before the art. It's as if the piano had been invented before music, or paint and canvas before drawing. . . . That very aware group of people who have tucked television under their wings is following a single rule in developing the new form of entertainment. The rule is as follows: Television must do a job which no existing medium can accomplish—or else there is no point in having television at all."—"Stage", April 15, 1939. "Lend Me Your Eyes", by Alan Rinehart.

"The art of television faces probably a tougher evolutionary problem than any of our so-called modern 'arts'. It inherits practically all the problems of radio and movies, with none of the solutions of either. Indeed, the solution to the television problem not only does not exist—it is not even in sight. Not even in Britain, where the British Broadcasting Corporation has been televising for two and a half years . . .

"The final answer lies with the . . . public. But the country's drive toward scientific advancement and a higher standard of living is so strong and wide that it is impossible to conceive either emotionally or historically, that television can be neglected or left undeveloped."—"Fortune", May, 1939. "Television II: 'Fade in Camera One'!"

"It becomes increasingly evident that television is a new art; it cannot follow a fixed formula developed by stage and screen. It is an art that calls for youth and new ideas; an art that must cut free of photographic traditions and build anew to fit its own place in the amusement field."—"New York Times", May 7, 1939. "Television: Act I Reviewed", by Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr.

THESE ALARMINGLY nebulous notes on television have one main axe to grind. This is a suggestion for a new technique for making viewing easy, which might also fit in well with production methods suitable for television studios. The alarm is, which part is the axe and which part is the grinding, and who is going to get an idea about this new viewing technique from mere words, when actual visualisation is the only thing that could carry conviction?

VISUAL LEVELS

The suggestion for a new technique comes from a consideration that all straightforward photography—in the raw, or reconstructed in studios—records everything in a scene with equal everyday realistic emphasis, in spite of the differences of importance of the various objects in the scene. This occurs most noticeably in film scenes, where the various visual ingredients have entirely different degrees of story interest, yet they are all recorded on exactly the same level, i.e. in their everyday pictorial relationship with one another.

And the strange thing is that in film studios producers go to the trouble to reconstruct realism for purposes of control over story-telling subject matter, yet all the elements are usually kept on the one level of everyday visual realism,

in spite of their varying degrees of importance to the story.

Well now, the axe we're grinding seems to be: that different levels of realism established photographically would be valuable aids to easy viewing. That this would be an entirely new method of presenting popular realistic material. That this method could give a more emphatic and immediate recognition of the outline of the story. That the manner of presentation could be more realistic and more stimulating than the ordinary film manner and would clarify more exactly the emotional elements of a story. Because the emphases of realism could be controlled in accordance with the emphases desired for the various emotional elements in the story.

Now comes the alarm: the alarming difficulty of giving an example of what is meant by all these realistic differences that can be imposed upon everyday visual realism. If we take the simplest possible example—at the risk of its being so simple that it seems boring—of a scene in which a girl is walking on a crazy pavement in a garden, alongside a brick wall, then there will be an opportunity of analysing objects in juxtaposed movement as well as in their static terms.

NORMAL SCENE

If the scene were shot normally, keeping the girl in the centre of the scene while she progressed along the path, we might see the brick wall, the ivy on it, the fruit trees against it, the flowers in front of it, the crazy pavement, and a hundred and one details. What the girl looks like, how she walks, how fast she walks, what clothes she is wearing, what shoes and all those things. And everything in that scene would be seen on exactly the same level of everyday realism, entirely reconstructed from life in a film studio.

Now, unless we are building a wall or laying a pavement or sending exhibits to a flower show, our main interest is the girl in the scene. All that the brick wall and the pavement slabs do is to prove that the girl is walking, at what speed, and where—not in a room or street, but in a garden. And to follow the story closely may require us to know what kind of garden. And the scene is certainly not intended to be a visual document or candid camera shot of a type of girl, in a type of garden, in a type of district, either. Yet, and we can't stress this point too much, everything in that scene has an equal substance of everyday realism: although we may care less than tuppence what anything looks like except, say, the girl.

Of course, we are naturally inclined to be more interested in the girl, or anything living, than in brick walls, ivy, or pavements, so we really *look* at her only. And of course, too, in normal good camera work she would occupy the commanding position on the screen, be shown up by contrasted light, texture, tones and movement, and have a better definition than anything else on the screen; all to retain her image and direct our attention to her at that moment in the story.

COMPOSED SCENE

But there could be several film ways of grading the visual realism of that scene to present a more direct version of it. If we take the following treatment of the above scene, regard it as a copy-book example of one way of analysing a walk, and leaving out story considerations for the sake of brevity, we could distinguish between the scene's levels of pictorial realism in such a way that we would see:—

A pair of girl's shoes moving forward into the scene in fairly close range against a strip of garden wall. Then the stockinged legs of the girl, seen from just above the knees downwards, without shoes on, perform walking movements until her feet come to rest and assume a stance close behind the shoes, while the panoramic movement of the garden wall continues. The hem of a skirt comes into the scene and masks her knees, while the background movement continues.

To explain the mechanism of the shooting might help us to visualise what the above scene would really look like. The shots could be obtained thus:—

For the brick wall we could use a long narrow, three-and-a-half feet high strip of movable panorama background with a good photographic texture—say, a coarse, heavy linen fabric stretched over a frame and lit from behind to obtain a candescent effect. On the material itself we could stick strips of adhesive tape with its edges trimmed to take away its severe straightness and stick the strips up to resemble the pointing of bricks. Over the bricks we could stick up a group of silhouette ivy leaves to resemble small bushes of climbing ivy, the leaves cut out of brown paper, etc. This method of conventionalising a garden wall is more photographic than the method of simply reproducing the wall in theatrical style. This strip of garden wall as a movable panorama when moved either to left or right would make anything placed in front of it appear to move at any speed required, according to the speed at which the pan backing was moved. This is the only prop in the scene required to let us see that it is a garden wall against which things are moving. So behind this three-and-a-half feet strip of wall we can fill the background up with the same material left absolutely plain, lit from behind and left stationary as a tone background.

The crazy pavement is a continuous strip of flat canvas on narrow drums arranged in front of the wall. A sheet of glass covers the part of it which is in the camera field. The shoes rest on the glass at a distance of a short step from one another and are drawn in R to L while the pavement pan and brick wall pan move slowly in the opposite direction. When the shoes are in the middle of the camera field, the glass stops and the pavement and wall pan increases speed. The illusion being that the shoes come into view while the camera is static, and then, when they occupy a central position, the camera appears to move with them in a trucking parallel shot. The shoes have been seen in close-up.

Now we change the camera lens so that the scene is seen in medium-close shot. The action continues as before until the stockinged feet of a girl enters scene R. The girl takes her weight on elbow supports out of the camera field and moves her legs scissors fashion. They are seen only from just above the knee down. The movement of the glass on which are the shoes, the pavement and the brick wall, is now altered to fit the pan movement of the camera as it slowly moves R to bring the girl's legs into the scene

and create the illusion that the scissors movement they perform are walking her into the scene.

Then, when the legs are in the centre of the scene, the camera pan smoothly stops and the panoramas in the scene alter speed to balance the change in the camera

EVERYDAY REALISM AND AN ACTION SPLIT UP INTO TERMS OF CONTINUITY

(Explanation of pictures on opposite page)

Here is one of the many ways of taking the everyday action of a walk and showing it in different grades of photographic realism. The visualisation of this example of action can only be suggested in stills. On the screen the panoramic movement of the background strip never ceases.

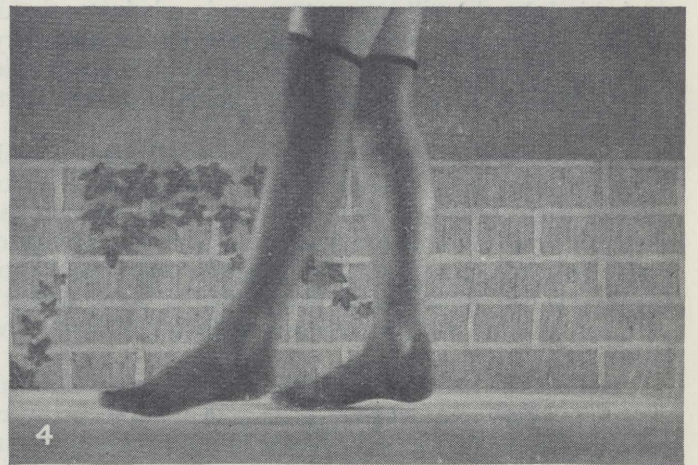
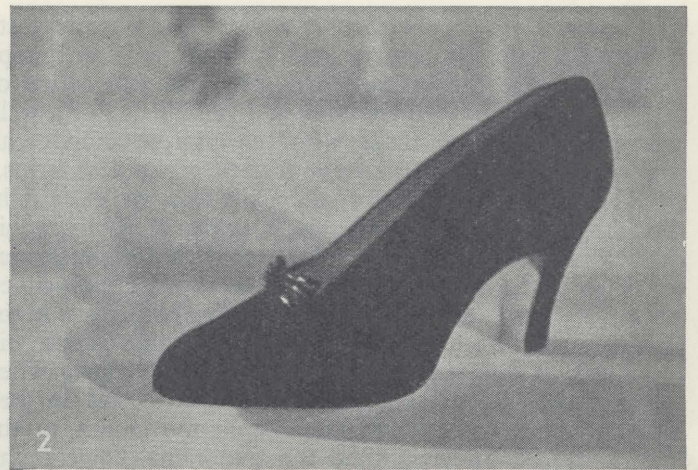
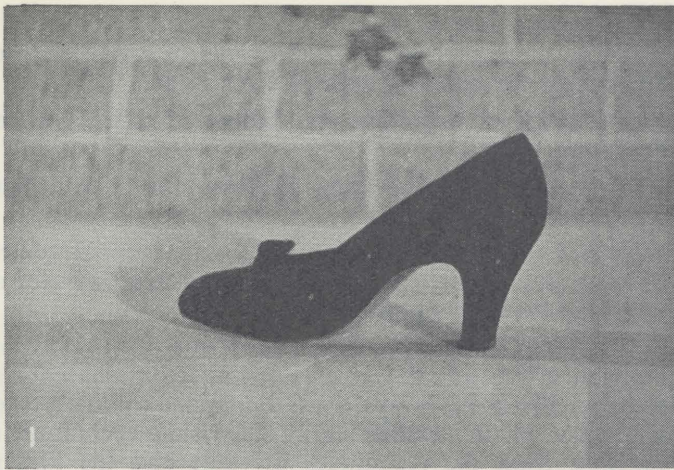
The example also indicates how studio control over movement might be adapted to the restrictions of direct television production continuity. As an example of film technique it might hint at a treatment as novel as the device of close-up was in the early days of film.

(Description of the stills)

- 1 & 2. A pair of girl's shoes passes through the scene one by one as if they are sliding along the ground. The panorama background moves in the opposite direction to that in which the shoes are pointing.
3. A girl's stockinged feet enter the scene. She is not walking. Her legs are moving in scissors fashion. Because the panorama strip of background is moving the opposite way, she *appears* to be walking, although she is not.
4. The action continues.
5. The shoes slide into the scene, and the hem of a skirt moves across the scene above them. The movement of the girl's legs and of the background continues.
6. The skirt and shoes stop and the legs come into position beside the shoes. The movement of the background continues.
7. The legs assume a static stance beside the shoes. Because the movement of the wall continues, the objects in front of it seem to slide forward.
8. The girl's feet are in the shoes. The legs are static. The movement of the background continues. The effect on the screen is that the girl is sliding along—that she is walking without having to walk because the screen has performed the walk for her, and the spectator now *knows* she is walking.

If the sequence was synchronised to the rhythm of step-sounds, the illusion would be heightened.

movement, so that there is no apparent alteration of background movement within the scene when the camera pan stops. When the legs are central and the shoes have reached the feet of the girl (the illusion is that the feet approach the shoes), the legs assume a stance whereby the knee of the front leg is bent forward with the heel raised from the ground, while the back leg is straight and at an angle from



the body. Now the bottom of a skirt hanging in pleats is brought into the camera field from R to L and stops when it covers the knees of the girl. The pan action of the pavement and wall continue and the illusion of a walk movement has been made with the concentration of all the visual elements in the scene into their simplest terms.

When we go on to portray the girl's face, we use a light float background of sky and clouds similar in photographic value to the brick wall, and a flat base with upright flowers on it so that this flower flat and the sky flat are panned through the scene beyond the girl, while she remains in the centre of camera field. The lights and camera action will be static. If the stage hands who carry the floats when making the pan movements, walk together and in step exactly, and communicate their walk movement to the flats they are carrying, then the panorama flowers and sky behind the girl will appear to move in relation to a walk movement of the girl, although really she is quite stationary. And the camera, too, will appear to be trucking parallel to the girl, although it and the lights are also quite stationary.

It may seem extraordinary to take all this trouble merely to portray a girl walking, but it would be much simpler than it sounds and would also look crisper and more pictorial than an ordinary realistic scene. Plenty of trouble is taken in a film studio to obtain perfection in any scene, and this trouble never interferes with the viewer's pleasure, so long as the scene is convincing and comprehensible.

It may seem absurd to describe such a puny example of the use of different levels of realism in a film scene, when their use has such vast possibilities for a new form of film technique, as indicated in the further notes herein. But nevertheless this example is some indication of those possibilities in film, and particularly in television.

PRESENTATION MERITS

Quite apart from the question of whether the preceding example can be visualised or not, it remains fairly true that from the viewer's point of view any story translated into visual terms should have a style of presentation stimulating in itself.

The stimulation relies on the producer's analytical selection of the emotional visual clues which will make the implications of the story clear. The style should give the viewers a confidence in their own ability to comprehend the subtleties of the story portrayed. And an underlined implication tends to be more acceptable to viewers seeking entertainment than a direct statement. The convincingness of a presentation lies in its acceptability, and from the viewers' point of view all material stands or falls by its ability to carry conviction.

From the producer's point of view, if the aim is to tell a story in a pointed and clear way, then the production emphasis must be on the visual manner of presentation. And if that manner must give a strong impression of realism to underline the story's implications, then an honest use of conventions dictated by the restrictions of a medium such as television is preferable to an attempt to disguise the medium's limitations by aping stage and film conventions without being able to achieve their degree of conviction. Any efforts to disguise the present-day mechanical deficiencies of television only show them up in contrast to the stage and the film.

LIMITATIONS EXPLOITED

At the moment the main limitations of television production for the sets now existing seem to be:

(a) A lack of definition and failure of tones between black and white.

(b) A lack of post-editing facilities for a continuity control of short scenes.

(c) A lack of studio equipment for the proper control of light, movement, and space, which is necessary for an exacting continuous performance.

There are numerous other problems in production, but the above are the chief ones affecting present-day viewers. The point is that these limitations could be taken advantage of in establishing a television technique as different from the techniques of stage and the film as these techniques themselves are from each other.

For instance, these limitations might be exploited as follows:

(a) *Lack of definition:* all tones between black and white could be reinforced by pattern stipple textures to hold and define and give life to their tone. No shadow should be relied on to create dimension unless it is reinforced by paint and/or texture. Subtleties of tone could be obtained by a painted gradation and reinforcing of shadows. Even faces of characters could be reinforced by the use of a new method of painting the expression muscles. The present lack of clarity in half-tones would necessitate such treatment. For example, if the half-tones of the metal of a revolver would bleach out, then the revolver could be painted a grey with further tone shadows of black and white painted on in exaggerated theatrical style. Why not, if it makes it easier to see? A definite theatrical convention suited to the limitations of the medium can soon be established. The aim is to give the eye an easy and immediate recognition of all the visual symbols of the story. With recognition made easy in this way, the portrayal of emotional subtleties is left to the manner of presentation. A current complaint of television viewers is one of eye fatigue, which, it seems to me, is mainly caused by the viewer scraping his eyes out trying to see the photographically obscure visual story clues.

(b) *Pre-editing difficulties:* apart from cue sheets and stage plans for the control of adequate stage mechanisms (which at present are inadequate) the use of replica sets and sections, and camera trucks, rails, and cranes capable of exactly repeating certain specified movements; another means of solving pre-editing problems is suggested in the following paragraph.

(c) *Stage control apparatus:* the stages of television studios should be conceived as having to be as much a mechanism of control as the cameras themselves. If a stage were constructed so that it was as much a mechanical robot as any other complicated mechanism, then all continuity movement could be planned and set for the final performance. A hint of this necessary control for television performances already exists. For example, in stage and film studio apparatus there are revolves, panoramas, wings, backings, flies, escalators, treads, slopes, etc. But the pre-editing requirements of direct television demand much more severe methods of control than either film or stage—if television is to present as flawless a continuity of intermingled movement as films do.

STUDIO CONTROL FULLY USED

But the best press-button studio stage apparatus it is possible to imagine would not be taken full advantage of in television unless it were used to divide realism into degrees of its story importance. Films haven't yet done this. Films very seldom use *differences* of visual realism to distinguish between the emotional levels of a story.

If the film is to make any advance as a story-telling medium it must isolate and emphasise the essential elements of a given story instead of copying the story in a one-level rendering that includes all the small, unnecessary, dull details of everyday realism. The use of constructive emphasis as a manner of presenting a story is peculiarly suited to television. The scale of home viewing sets require the utmost visual simplification and emphasis; and the temporary lack of sharp definition makes scenes which have a wide range of realistic objects impossible to view easily when treated with equal photographic emphasis.

Film makers have instinctively tried to counter the anomaly of the equal visual emphasis of everyday realism by the use of selection, movement, composition, lighting, focus, close up, etc. But they have not consciously gone further to create a variety of levels of realism to avoid the difficulties of selection in one level of realism only. Often the visual interest of film stories is sustained by an interest in the personality of the players quite outside the story interest, while the story itself is often padded with gag incidents and sequences to hide the paucity of its range of visual rendition.

FILM VALUES

In films now we have usually about an hour and a half of generalised realism to act as a setting for a story which gives us dramatic climaxes of short durations—often as little as a minute or less. If the emotional peaks of the story were presented in terms of analytical realism, of constructive emphasis, it would be found that casual realism could be used sparingly, simply to establish the jumping-off ground for exploring the subtleties of the story's emotional peaks, to which the longest part of the story could then be devoted. If this were done by new methods of photographic and sound control, then the cinema as a popular medium would lose at least one of its drawbacks. This drawback is the peeping-Tom taint which present-day films have, and which tends to make an audience self-conscious when any real emotional intimacy is portrayed. Whereas if implied emotional subtleties were portrayed as simple visual statements of analytical realism in direct film terms, we would avoid the present film story bondage of generalised realism, which gives the impression of a portrayal of people accidentally seen through the peep-hole of the screen.

CONTROL OVER THE MEDIUM

The technique of using different levels of realism to present a story's emotional realities, in contrast to the technique used in films to-day, requires a studio 'trick' photographic control of almost all natural movements so as to reconstruct them in a specifically film way. And this technique would force explanatory visual movement on the screen to be a statement made in its own conventional terms. For cinema has its own terms, just as ballet has.

As such a technique would require a stricter studio control than that usually employed in film production, it would have a very logical application in a television studio,

where the restrictions of space and lighting continuity, and the need for continuous action are such that an absolute control over adequate studio mechanisms is necessary. The future television audience will expect the same stimulation in presentation as they have learnt to expect from the cinema. And that effectiveness of stimulation, obtained from the simple physical juxtaposition of scenes in continuity, by which it is possible to tell a story in post-edited film, will have to be matched with some equivalent effectiveness in television.

In film, if the preliminary production started from the premise that the usual dramatic film treatments did not sufficiently allow for the fact that all elements in a scene are recorded by a camera on exactly the same plane of objective realism—that the minor props, backgrounds, crowds, and leads, are all invested with an equal photographic substance on the same level of realism as each other—in spite of the differences of their importance within the story—then from that premise a surer sense of realism could be built whereby all the visual clues were isolated in movement in a manner peculiar to the possibilities of photographic camera control. Such a manner of presenting visual story clues would give a stronger stimulation to an audience who would be put on the alert to the emotional realities of the plot in which the producer had directly stressed their significant elements so that they might be more pictorially, and so *immediately*, understood.

THEATRE EMPHASIS

On the stage we can see an example of players on a different level of realism from that of their environment, props, sets, etc. And so far as emotional values are concerned the theatre has that advantage over present day dramatic film. It is this difference of realistic substance in a stage drama that allows an audience an immediate story contact with the players, whose portrayal of emotional nuances can be concentrated on for an understanding of the subtleties of the drama. It is possible to concentrate on the players, because they exist on a more definite level of realism than their subsidiary background.

FILM EMPHASIS

But films, by their very nature of control and synthesis, could present a much greater variety of emotional nuances than the stage, and with a far more exciting variation of the levels of realism. To do this in film might have the production risk that audiences would be required to adapt themselves to a film treatment which departed drastically from what they are accustomed to. But it would be a risk worth undertaking because films badly need new story-telling methods to enliven them and give the whole medium fresh vitality.

TELEVISION IMMEDIACY

Television has a special appeal in that it enables the audience to participate directly and as a mass in scenes that are actually being enacted at the moment. The resulting vitality gives it an advantage over the cinema in every respect except those of pre-editing and colour. But the post-editing advantage of film could be matched by the development of a pre-editing television-studio mechanism. (Colour, moreover, is now a practical possibility in television. And already sound in television is better than in film.) The use of studio mechanism to give ease of continuity control would also give control over movement, so that all movement relative to the players, and between

the players, would be strictly conventionalised by mechanical means. An extreme example might be that a door which was set in a wall, moved over a player rather than the player walked normally through it.

The conventionalising of movement and other elements in a presentation of television drama could lead to television becoming more *visually stimulating* than modern popular film. This would reinforce the advantage that television has, in contrast to film, of being a direct compère of presentation material.

FILM IN TELEVISION

The present technique of film and the broadcasting of film, are entirely wrong for the medium of television. Films will, of course, be a practical aid in the preliminary stages of developing popular television for some time to come. The necessities of network broadcasts, and of using material that is to hand already, as well as the use of film sequences specially created as material for the treatment resources of a direct television production, will keep film as an ally for some time. But the medium of television, having so many new elements in its make-up, could soon develop a new technique without arousing the prejudice of the public, as might happen in the cinema if one were to depart too drastically from the present-day film formulas of story-telling. Good television production will influence the manner of films; and vice versa, because film production will always have its real advantage of post-editing and its power of elaborate concentration on one shot at a time.

If television companies are investing faith and money in the future of television in spite of the 'ifs' of politics, war, public response, mechanical problems, etc., and if they regard television as requiring even a further three to five years before it is a practical and generally popular medium of entertainment—with colour, and perhaps stereoscopy, as possibilities of further impetus for the sales of sets—then those companies should realise that programme research—the creative and talent side of presentation—is as important as the creative engineering and mathematical side of the business. If so, research should be started extensively in readiness for the compound multiplicity of demands created by the development and progress of television services.

Good entertainment material for television will be more difficult to find than it has been and is for films. A feature film takes an average of two months' work for an hour and a half's repetitive entertainment. In television, on the other hand, assuming that there will be at least twelve hours broadcast daily and that about nine hours per day are devoted to news, sports, educational or classical interest items, this will leave at least two hours per day for which to find new entertainment story material. Daily telecasting of new story material will require enormous resources of talent if a satisfying standard of entertainment is to be retained. Hollywood with its ample financial backing and its knack of buying up all the successful talent it notices anywhere in the world, and having had twenty years of experience of adapting that talent to the film machine, still can't always adapt it, or always quite keep up to the requirements of supplying the cinemas with nine hours of first rate shows per week.

PROGRAMME RESEARCH

Television, which will make much greater demands for material, will have to devise a filing system such as has never been seen before. Its talent spotters will have an enormous number of responsibilities. For example, they may have to link up with educational authorities for aid in spotting likely embryonic talent which could be fostered and developed on some sort of probation system.

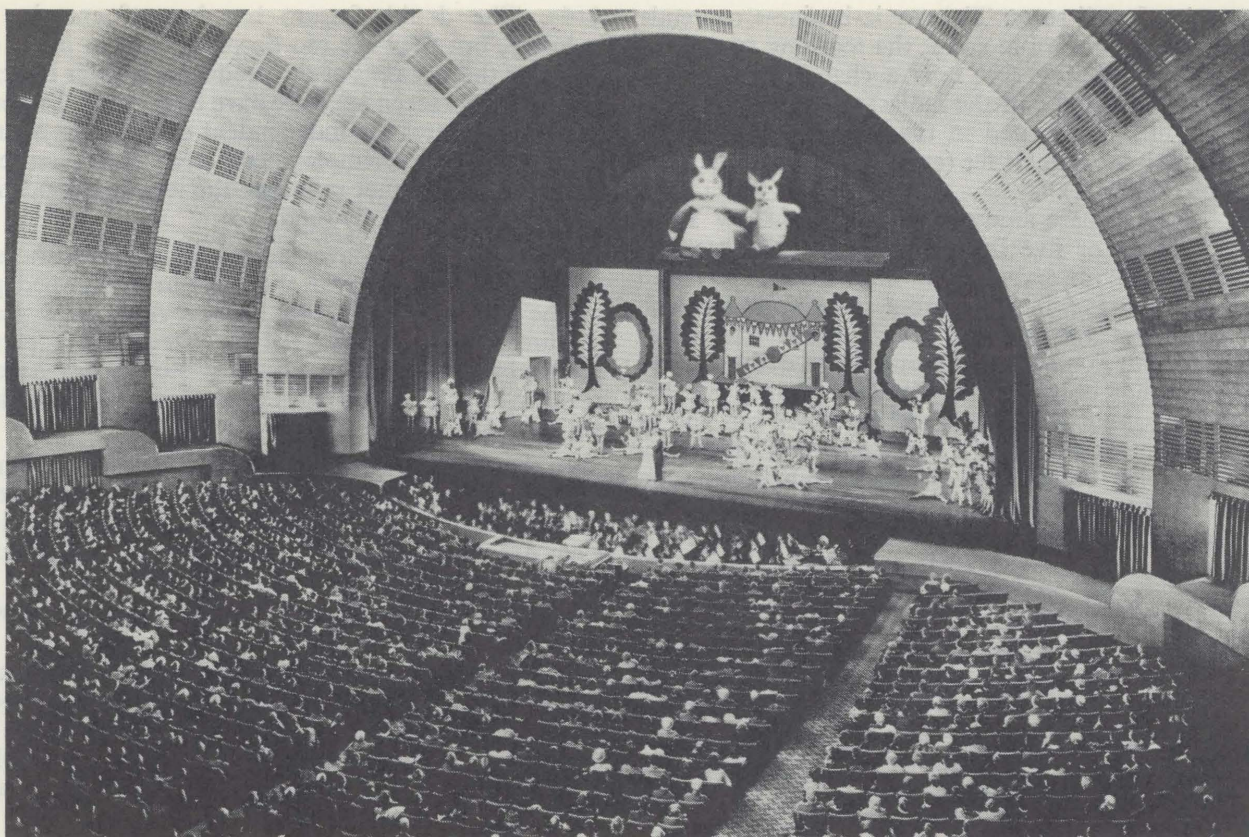
Another section of a Programme Research department could be adapting and notating all classical material suitable for television, with synopses and notes on possible treatments as a ready aid for producers. Material such as the plays of Shakespeare could be adapted and presented in totally different styles, so that the style was almost the main source of the viewing stimulation. Just as, for example, two very good and very different jazz bands may have entirely different styles of playing the same popular song number, yet each might render a perfect and equally stimulating performance.

In the section of the department at the disposal of the educational producers, one simple research activity might be the exploration of average audience response and its degree of perception of different visual methods of presentation, conducted with the object of finding out which visual method gives the best retention results. A classification of audiences according to their various powers of perception and reactions to given presentation styles would also be of general use to producers.

In the studio section of the department there might be continual experimenting with model apparatus to simplify stage and light continuity, so that improvements could be effected on whatever standard equipment existed in the necessary mobile shooting stages. At the same time there would be experiments with model stages for plays that had unusual movement and light problems of their own.

The Programme Research department should be one that had such a comprehensive knowledge of the problems and possibilities of production that a producer could approach it with any problem of treatment which might arise in the preliminary plans of presentation of any subject. A producer could be given several ideas of presentation possibilities adapted to a production problem, and could choose the one best suited to his or her original conception of the treatment. Or the producer could merely use the suggestions as an incentive to his own creation. The preliminary moulding of a production job is its most important creative phase, and all assistance possible should be available to a producer.

To summarise these notes, it is most important that exhaustive television programme research should be undertaken now, before the vitality and novelty of the new medium is wasted, otherwise there is the danger that a makeshift standard of presentation due to the enormous problems of the new medium, may become regarded by the public as being the most that television has to offer. An efficient Programme Research department could at the end of a few years' work be of tremendous value both to the public, the producers, and to the manufacturers of television sets. Its aim being to give the public its entertainment with the best possible television *showmanship*.



Radio City Music Hall, New York

HERE WE BE AS GODS

An entertaining account of New York cinemas which will interest English readers but may startle Americans. It is written by a newcomer to New York—JOHN H. WINGE

THE MOVIES in the United States of America are more than a mere amusement after the day's work. In some rural districts, for instance, the people saw a real stage-show for the first time only a few years ago, when the Federal Theatre sent out road-companies. Asked about her impression of the performance one child answered: "I like the round actors better than the flat ones". And another said: "It was the strangest movie! There wasn't any screen!"

It was impossible for the children even to realise that they were seeing real actors in the flesh. They had never seen any fictional events except in the movies, so they looked upon the stage as an improved kind of film.

As the reading of good books by the Americans decreased they found their appetites for fiction satisfied by the movies. Pictures appeal directly to the emotions which eliminates the necessity of using the brain. If the camera works the brain may sleep. Thus the movies in the United States particularly are more important than books and theatre, even than radio. The hard-working person welcomes the relaxation from his troubles in the dark room, watching the shiny world of light in front of him.

The people of the incredibly tense and energetic city of New York both invest in and receive lots more meaning from the movies than the people of many other big cities. Thus different types of movies are developed. They interest not only the expert, but everybody who is interested in the cultural and sociological meaning of the movies. Much

more is reflected in them than the plain demand for amusement.

To begin with the chain-type of theatres, for example, the enormous trust of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. But first to correct myself: they tell me there are no trusts in the United States. There are only "affiliated theatres". They are "affiliated" with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount, Warners, 20th Century-Fox, or Radio-Keith-Orpheum. Those "affiliated" with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer are called "Loew's Theatres", and, as you probably know, spread over the entire world. In the metropolitan area of New York there are 75 Loew's theatres with capacities of 1,000-5,000 seats. Each section is supervised by a district-manager, but the main office of Loew's Theatres in the world is in the Loew's Building, Times Square, New York.

A Loew's theatre is very typical of the average movie-palace. The expression "palace" is stressed, because for his admission fee the customer gets not only two pictures, a cartoon, newsreels and organ-music, but also the right to use a luxurious lounge and voluptuously furnished ante-rooms. The architectural designs look for a middle course between the phantasy of an oriental despot and the art of a rewarded fancy-baker. Even people with moderate means can afford to revel in this breath-taking splendour, because the admission for the early performances is only 25 cents. It increases later in the day in some houses to as much as 55 cents. In nearly all movies in the United States there is

only one price for all seats. The movie-business contends that it is a social measure to admit the morning customers at a low price, claiming that it is a chance for the unemployed. In the afternoon the ladies, tired by shopping, can afford a little more, and in the evening the working people must pay the highest fee (even though they may not earn enough to pay it).

In the Times Square amusement centre of New York, Loew's have four or five houses, most of which start at 9 a.m. and give six or seven shows until 2 a.m. Here also you find two houses which feature a stage-show and one picture instead of the usual double feature. The other houses start about noon and have four shows daily. Loew's show pictures not only of their "affiliated" firm Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, but any other good ones they can find to satisfy the enormous appetite of their vast audience. Mostly they play second-run pictures, sometimes soon after their Broadway *première*.

A faultless performance in any chain theatre is taken as a matter of course. Every usher must consider himself as the personal ambassador of the world-firm Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (or RKO or Paramount and so on) and to uphold its reputation even at the risk of his private life. He has to be (first condition) clean-shaved, (second condition) without pimples, (third condition) neatly combed and of (fourth condition) excellent manners. If manners, hair-dress, pimples and shave are all right he can rise sometimes to the position of head usher and the head usher can become an assistant manager. The top of the career is the shining example of Mr. Louis B. Mayer himself who, however, was never an usher.

Besides the different "affiliated theatres"-groups there are many independent "neighbourhood"-theatres. The "affiliated" are owned by influential and wealthy groups and represent "luxury for everyman". The independent houses (14,000 independent in the U.S.A. as compared to only 3,000 affiliated ones) are also rather lavishly equipped although in their architecture they do not aim at the moon. They show their pictures several weeks and often even several months after their Broadway showings. The average admission fee is 17.5 cents. The owners complain bitterly about this figure which means a rather poor business and advocate an advance of at least 5 cents. But the attendance has decreased strikingly in the last few years, therefore making necessary such practices as Bingo, Bank-roll, Jackpot, and so on. About six years ago they started these games which promise the audience prizes between 2 and 40 dollars. Two-dollar prizes are much more frequent than the 40-dollar ones. The movies in the suburbs have these lotteries twice a week, but the smaller ones, particularly in worker districts, play Bingo daily. As the games started there was a distinct improvement at the box-office. To-day the attraction is not over, but without doubt it is weaker.

Other means to keep the business on a tolerable level are gifts of books or plates or handkerchiefs on certain days. On Saturdays they play serials for the "kids"—the same type of serials which some years ago were popular also among the adults. By putting good artists and a poor picture on the same programme the vaudeville-entertainment makes good business and the low cost of the picture permits higher expenditure for the stage-show.

Usually the programmes of the independent theatres are changed three times weekly. Thus they show altogether six pictures in seven days, and pay an average rent of

\$165. The double-feature has lots of enemies in the industry, but they are too deeply rooted to be in danger. Till now the attempts of the producers to offer better shorts instead of the second feature have been futile. Discontented with the business the independent owners see mainly two reasons for it: unemployment and bad pictures. The movie-owners cannot influence the job-situation, thus they try to influence Hollywood.

The owner of an average movie-house in the suburbs said to me: "Every year the guys in Hollywood promise us the biggest year in film history. And every year they produce worse pictures. All we need in the pictures is action, but all that we get is lousy stuff. They have a permanent bunch of wise-guys there, but the more they talk and broadcast the less we have to show."

In the afternoon his audience is composed of women and children and in the evening of families, also with little ones. They all like to see "action", but nothing historical, not even American history. Advertisement of the programmes is very important and well-paid experts make up the advertisements in the local newspapers and in the store-windows.

Completely different is the home of the jitterbugs, the Paramount on Times Square. Even to-day we recall its glamour when it was New York's biggest movie palace. The rather sweetish luxury of the chain theatres is here refined and you will find unexpected signs that the architect tried to build something of what he imagined was a "Grand Opera House". Yellowish light flows over large carpets and nearly original old paintings hang in nearly original old frames.

The Paramount shows only pictures of the production firm of the same name, with which it is "affiliated". Its speciality is not its pictures, but its shows. Every programme features a well-known jazz band which performs about one hour and brings with it singers, dancers and comedians. Through the radio and gramophone records these bands become highly popular, particularly among the youngsters. Thus lots of girls of between 12 and 17 years of age and boys a little bit older crowd the house every day. They come mostly in the early morning for the first performance and stay until the last performance of the band in the evening. During the performance there are wild outbreaks of enthusiasm and the kids prove in the aisles and also in their seats their nickname "jitterbugs". I witnessed myself the show of the "King of Swing" Benny Goodman, and saw things in the audience I had never seen even in pictures taken of the cannibals of the Papuan Islands. The excitement of the youngsters, their craziness and their exhibitionism are hard to describe. These emotional uproars are not connected with pictures, but with a movie house, hence I mention them here. One of the Loew's theatres, also on Times Square, competes with the Paramount by featuring attractive bands, but finds the best ones already bound for Paramount, which advertises "the nation's leading bands and outstanding stars of the stage screen and radio."

Having surpassed Paramount and Roxy, Radio City Music Hall is the "No. 1 movie-house" of to-day and probably of some part of the future. Here also we find the stage-show besides the picture an important attraction. Actually, Radio City is one of the most remarkable sight-seeing objects of the American metropolis. Like the whole

Rockefeller Centre in which it is located it is architecturally to be taken very seriously. The real spirit of this young and powerful nation is felt in the conception of the magnificent building and its rooms.

Radio City is gigantic in its measurements and stresses it by artistic details. Six thousand two hundred seats are offered in this largest indoor theatre in the world; five hundred and thirty-six people are the regular staff to operate the enterprise; one hundred and twelve men work as ushers and elevator boys. The ushers have high-school educations, some even college. Before they start to work they are trained for three weeks in a special course. The ideal is not the militaristically trained usher who scares the audience by his gloomy expression, but the amiable and gentle one who acts as a host.

There is a steady staff of artists: the world-famous Rockettes, the utmost in precision achieved by a girl-troup. Many tears must have flown until they reached this extraordinary exactness. Then too there are the ballet, the glee club and the orchestra of 75 men. There are 46 Rockettes, but only 36 are on the stage at any one time, because each week there are 10 on vacation. The ballet seems to get less work, because of the 36 members only 4 are off weekly.

Leon Leonidoff, Russell Markert, Florence Rogge and Gene Snyder are the producers of the well-worth-seeing shows. Despite the fact that usually they change the programme every Thursday and really only five days are available for rehearsals the average artistic level is remarkably high. Of course, the staff has plenty of facilities for relaxation in order to be fit for the four (and Sunday five) performances daily: there is a dormitory for employees who do not like to go home so late; a library, a doctor, and three nurses, a large roof-garden for sports and rest, a restaurant, and an elegant preview-room where any day at 8 p.m. the newest pictures are performed for the personnel.

One of the most successful experiments was the staging of a condensed edition of "Madame Butterfly". It was played to more than a quarter million persons in two weeks, more than ordinarily hear this opera in twenty years at the Metropolitan Opera House.

The ballet performed Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Scheherazade", de Falla's "El Amor Brujo", Ravel's "Bolero" and many other not too conventional topics. Ernoe Rapee as orchestra conductor is likewise ambitious and directs programmes which do not include the routine "Poet and Peasant" and "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2". He takes his material from a large musical library maintained at the music hall.

The pictures are selected from the best of all studios, if possible. Usually the show is in contrast to the picture. Some British features like *Victoria the Great* had their American premiere here. The picture which had the longest run was *Snow White*: five weeks. The audience consists mostly of regular customers who come to see each new programme. Besides there are visitors to New York and very few famous names are not in the guest-book. Since the opening in December, 1932, 38 millions of people bought tickets in Radio City. These cost 40 cents until 1 p.m., 66 cents until 6 p.m. and 88 cents until closing. The First Mezzanine has reserved seats for \$1.10 and \$1.65.

The advertisements of Radio City are striking, because of their modesty and good taste. They are plain printed quotations from newspaper criticisms and a short view of the highlights of the show. And a Sunday orchestra-and

glee club-broadcast from its own studio in the building gives a well-selected programme of good music.

Seeing the movie houses of Forty-second Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenue, I consider them, still blinded by the opulence of Radio City, as the stepchildren of the distinguished palace family. They start at 8 a.m. and end at 2, even at 4 a.m. First admission is 10 cents, the most expensive one 25 cents. The programme consists of pictures which are at least three months and at most ten years old.

The audience is distinctly transient, the two to three million people who pass this famous block every day, the cheap side-street of Times Square. The shows after midnight are a welcome shelter for passengers going out-of-town who have to wait for their buses (there are several bus-terminals in the neighbourhood) and also for people who have no lodging and can sleep here in a comfortable seat for ten cents (after midnight).

Generally, they prefer to show sex- and gangster-pictures. "The Oklahoma Kid" with Cagney was advertised on posters with the following inscription: "*A two gun killer who gave no quarter and asked for none! He took possession of the underworld reins, driving his horde of criminals, extorting gold at the point of guns! The only law he knew was a gun in each hand! With the fastest horse underfoot, he was against the law and for the law-dealing death to whoever dared to challenge his might!*"

And a forgotten old picture, "A Scarlet Week-end", with Virginia Bruce, is recommended by lurid words which read: "*A sensational exposure of lust maddened youth running wild and committing the unpardonable sin, with gin flowing wildly, and the weakness of the flesh that knew no bounds! Sex and sensuality reign at a 'Scarlet Week-end' party, with highballs the inspiration for midnight carousals! Racing along the primrose path, none gave thought to tomorrow!*"

Nevertheless it is hard to find the proper pictures for this changing audience and often they discontinue the showing of a new film before noon, because in the first three or four hours about 1,000 people have already seen the new programme and possibly refused it. "It's pure guess-work", confesses the manager of one of the Forty-second Street houses, all of which were once very famous theatres like Ziegfeld's New Amsterdam or the Harris, and about seven years ago became movies. Thus the whole street went cheap just as the admission charges of three or five dollars in the theatres became ten cents admissions for obsolete movies.

A single speciality is the Cameo which shows Soviet pictures almost exclusively. On Times Square the Astor performs big British successes like *Pygmalion* and now *Goodbye, Mr. Chips!* There are some smaller houses such as "Little Carnegie", "Filmarte" and "55th Street Playhouse", which show exclusively the good French films. They also are sometimes interested in the showing of other progressive pictures. Their audience is rather sophisticated and must pay an average admission fee of 60 cents. Newsreel shows are proportionally rare. There are only about five newsreel houses and they are rather expensive (25 cents for one hour). Cartoon movies like the London Cameo and Tatler, do not exist in New York City. In Yorkville two houses are showing German pictures, another movie on the upper Broadway shows Italian ones, and a Spanish theatre is the home of films from Mexico and Argentine.

All in all, a catholic choice of films for the New Yorker.



Dark Victory

First National

DEATH ALWAYS WINS

whether one be the Emperor of Mexico, a fluffy-minded society girl, or even a lovable, apparently immortal schoolmaster called Mr. Chips. But there is not only sorrow in these films reviewed by ALAN PAGE

LAST QUARTER I HAD the rare treat of seeing two Bette Davis films. I say I, and not we, because I believe it to be true that Bette Davis is not everyone's choice, but that does not shake my conviction that she is the greatest, the only actress in the cinema. And indeed after seeing those two films, *Dark Victory* and *Juarez*, my conviction is stronger than ever.

The essence of acting on the films, as opposed to appearing on them, lies in the ability to communicate to an audience what a character is thinking and feeling. The feeling is comparatively easy, once the control of facial expression has been mastered. Garbo has an unfailing camera instinct in this respect; she always looks right without the least difficulty, but she never seems to be thinking beyond the immediate moment. With Bette Davis one is always two jumps ahead with her of her dialogue. Every shot is a build-up for the next one, so that when her part is finished, her characterisation has the inevitability of completeness. She lives her characters rather than acts them. There is no one else in films to-day who can quite do that. No one who can so successfully overcome the technical but unavoidable disadvantage of building up a character in scenes that are not consecutive in the story. Muni, Tracy, Laughton, Rainer, Bergner and the rest can be

relied upon to act any scene without fault, but when the director says "cut" the performance is finished and complete; everything has been said and done, the thought current is switched off instead of being left on to illuminate the next shot.

But to return to criticism. *Dark Victory* was all about a young high-spirited girl who suffered from dizzy spells and refused to see a doctor, partly from fear, partly from obstinacy. When she is finally persuaded to see Doctor George Brent we learn that she has an incurable brain disease. An operation is performed which gives temporary relief, but her days are numbered and sudden death will come within a very short time. On such a medical foundation is the story built and it is never a particularly convincing one. But Bette Davis forces one to swallow it all, and when death does come to put an end to a life that has been pitifully misspent and all too briefly atoned for, one is genuinely moved, such is the persuasiveness of her acting. But, unfortunately, we are rudely reminded by a sentimental anti-climax that it is, after all, a highly melodramatic piece of hokum that we have been watching.

In *Juarez*, Bette Davis takes the part of the tragic Carlotta, wife of Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico. It is a comparatively small part, since the wretched Empress's sole claim

to fame is that she went mad, and this Bette Davis does in the three most exciting minutes of the film, culminating in a brilliantly photographed flight into the darkness. She is the one convincing thing in this grandiose version of an extremely sordid chapter in the world's history. To the blaring accompaniment of pretentious "atmosphere" music we are shown how democracy in the uninspiring form of Juarez, President of Mexico, triumphs over dictatorship, as represented by Napoleon III, with the duped Maximilian dithering in the middle between humanitarian ideals and hereditary Habsburg weakness. It would appear that the purpose of the producers was to make the events of seventy years ago a political parallel of certain happenings to-day, hence all the vapouring about democracy about which, in those days, nobody had become conscious. But in any case it is extremely unlikely that Maximilian was as enlightened as they make out, and if he did have such good ideas, then it was a pity that Juarez should have been so narrow-minded and stupid as to reject his offer of collaboration, since there was every opportunity of establishing a disinterested monarchy such as is enjoyed by this country to-day. However, once Juarez had turned down the Emperor's overtures, Maximilian could only abdicate or rule by bloodshed. He chose the latter course, was let down by Napoleon, defeated and shot. And because by his saintly bearing and his kind instincts Maximilian had won the sympathy of the audience it was necessary for Juarez to clear the fair name of democracy by murmuring over his coffin "Forgive me"!

It is very difficult to know what to make of this film since it is produced with the hypnotising distinction that Hollywood lavishes on its more ambitious historicals. But it is certainly the most spectacular entertainment, bedizened with a glittering cast, and that is all that most people will

care about. Brian Aherne, as Maximilian, has a much more sympathetic part than Muni and acts with considerable distinction. Muni's performance is very difficult to assess. He is a sort of lone wolf, never once appearing in the same scene as Bette Davis or Aherne, and his part is entirely on one note, heavy, obstinate, relentless and unrelieved by humour. His half-breed make-up is clever, and he certainly looks the part; it is not his fault that it is a dull part.

From the British studios last quarter came *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. This was, of course, the adaptation of James Hilton's book, so assiduously plugged by Alexander Woolcott. So far as it is possible to have any advance views on a film I had thought that this story would prove too tenuous, too elusive in atmosphere to make a successful adaptation. But I was wrong. The film captures the atmosphere of the book with quite astonishing faithfulness. For this the chief thanks must go to Robert Donat, whose portrayal of the lovable school-master is brilliantly done. His task is made easier by a fine script and an intelligent director. There is not a false note among all the school scenes which time and again remind one with pride and with shame of one's forcible feeding on Latin and Maths. It is a sentimental story, this tale of a diffident pedagogue with his hopes and his disappointments, his late-flowering love and the ultimate affection of pupils and colleagues that crowns a life of service that can have little thanks save an occasional stirring in the memories of those he has taught. Donat takes us through this life with its background of schoolboys, games, prep. and even war and gives us an exact picture of the man that Hilton wrote about. The love scenes are particularly well done, and there is a performance of exquisite grace and charm by Greer Garson, as Mrs. Chips.

Also adapted from a book was *The Four Feathers*,



Yes, My Darling Daughter

First National



Three Smart Girls Grow Up

Universal

A. E. W. Mason's famous story of courage rewarded and honour desullied. This was Korda produced, Korda directed and Korda set-designed. In fact, a thoroughly British film with a fine British cast and a glorious British war waged and won against that rotter the Khalifa and his fuzzy-wuzzies in the Technicolor Egyptian Sudan. It has all been done before, but never with such a good script and such a wealth of exciting battle scenes. The war, too, comes in for some hard knocks and although there are many scenes of bloodshed and cruelty calculated to rouse the fiercest passions of patriotism, the hero's pacifism puts the other side of the picture very fairly. I liked John Clement's performance as the recipient of the white feathers, and I liked Ralph Richardson's overacting of the sun-blinded officer. It was also a most enjoyable relief to see fun poked at old Aubrey Smith's stern warrior act.

Yet another book provided the material for an excellent home-made film last quarter, Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*. Laughton and Hitchcock combined on this and between them they provided some exciting, spectacular entertainment. Laughton strutted about in a John Bull make-up and Hitchcock let him get on with it, confining himself to the barest minimum of his directorial tricks. The smuggling and the shipwreck scenes on the Cornish coast were magnificently done, and every London theatre contributed its quota of well-known actors, besides there being a very promising newcomer, Mary Maguire. Whether she can act I have still to find out, but she is certainly good to look at.

Will Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers really part company now that they have made *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle*? It is a burning question for many filmgoers and not without justification since these two stars have together given so much enjoyment to so many people. Certainly it is going to be difficult to find a better story for them than their last, which is a true story and refreshingly free from the artificial misunderstandings which have carried them from song to dance in their previous films and which have palled

with repetition. The Castles were always happily married, their story was concerned not with the ultimate triumph of love but with the triumph of their dancing career, which progressed from hardship and disappointment to fame and idolisation by two continents. Mrs. Castle is alive to-day, her husband was killed after the war while on an instructional flight, and that is what happens in the film. Astaire was always better at acting than Rogers, and this film, which makes greater demands on them both, is, therefore, a greater success for him. But Rogers's dancing is quite the equal of Astaire's and they have many amusing numbers, including the Cakewalk and the Maxixe. The ending only is over-sentimentalised when we see Rogers dreaming of some of their dances together.

If ever there was a woman's picture then *Love Affair* is it. This brought together for the first time the elegant Irene Dunne and the "great French lover," Charles Boyer. And what a bringing together! Homeward bound from Naples they meet on a liner, where repressions are proverbially unknown and last flings *de rigueur*. They fall in love—indeed, it would have been a crime if they hadn't—they step off at Madeira to see his mother, covered in years and very old lace, and part when they get to New York with a date some months hence on top of the Empire State. He keeps the tryst, she would have done but is knocked down by a car at the last minute and paralysed. He doesn't know, she won't tell him. It is only in the last reel that he finds out and so, after an agony of suspense, true love triumphs. Sloppy, yes, but it gets you, because there is a lot of delightful humour cunningly mixed up with the sentiment and because Dunne and Boyer pour out such quantities of charm that it is impossible to resist them. As the child in *The Women* would say, a "love-dovey" film.

One can only presume from *The Ice Follies* of 1939 that the box-office appeal of Joan Crawford is not what it was. Failing that, her appearance in this film must remain a mystery, because here was a "skatie" with the most perfectly mechanical plot yet devised. Not even James Stewart or Lew Ayres could do anything to help. And yet there is quite a deal of enjoyment to be had from it for those who admire spectacular skating and ice ballets of a kind that make even Sonia Henjje look like the veriest amateur.

Now that a decent interval has elapsed it was to be expected that the "happened-one-night" story should be pressed into service again. It has its points as may be seen from *It's a Wonderful World*. Claudette Colbert, to whom it originally happened one night, has it happen to her again when she becomes the unwilling companion and later the unwanted admirer of a fugitive from misjustice. Sometimes the fun is laboured, but on the whole it is very amusing and it all comes very naturally to Claudette Colbert, who this time has James Stewart to plague her, when she is not plaguing him.

There were, by the way, two further instalments of the screen careers of the Misses Shirley Temple and Deanna Durbin. *The Little Princess* was a version of the children's story. Shirley survives the Boer War, an interview with Queen Victoria and a blaze of Technicolor with her usual aplomb and there is really nothing new to say about her, except that this is a particularly good production for her and that her charm is undiminished. *Three Smart Girls Grow Up* told us nothing about Deanna Durbin that we did not know before. She is still an enchanting creature and far and away the smartest of the three girls.



Hôtel du Nord

La Bête Humaine

MISPRINTS AND LIMITATIONS

"Possibly we ask too much of the screen" says ARTHUR VESSELO pessimistically in his review of this Quarter's continental films

THERE ARE MISPRINTS and misprints. There is the less serious type of misprint in which, say, "surrealism" is written "surrrealism"—the type, that is, in which a sharp eye will mark the error but a not-so-sharp eye probably read what was intended; and there is also the subtler misprint, which is not obviously a misprint at all, and which may be entirely misleading, since even the sharpest eye cannot be trusted to detect it. Of the latter type is a misprint which appeared in these columns in the last issue, when *Professor Mamlock* was described as "politically biased" instead of "politically based."

What degree of importance the correction has may be left to the reader to decide: the remainder of the original review should in any case have conveyed the writer's ideas clearly enough. But it will be agreed that the error was worth indicating, particularly in its reference to so discussed a film.

Two more Russian films have been seen here this quarter—a pair with certain curious points in common, and well deserving of analysis. The first was the widely-heralded Eisenstein opus, *Alexander Nevski*; of which so much has already been said that to say any more seems almost super-

fluous. But it is never superfluous to formulate a cooler judgment after first enthusiasms have died down; and *Alexander Nevski*—the only complete film in ten years to have been directed by one of the two greatest names of the Soviet silent period—has lent itself remarkably well to first enthusiasms. In this respect it has been almost another *Modern Times*.

While far indeed from being an uninteresting film, it is not perhaps the superlative masterwork that some have declared. In technique, the elaborate editing-conceptions of an earlier day have been abandoned in favour of an efficient simplicity (not vastly unlike the decried "hack-editing" of *Thunder Over Mexico*), and in this field, as Mr. Herman Weinberg justly pointed out in the Spring number of this magazine, there is little sign of the once-predicted "new use" of sound. There are a few minor faults of continuity, including the normal measure of obscurity attendant on fighting-sequences; but what is really striking is the way in which nearly every critic has lavished praise on possibly the most doubtful element in the film—the tendency to static composition of separate shots.

Granted that many of the compositions in themselves are "pictorially beautiful," it should hardly have been necessary at this time of day to repeat that a series of static pictures, however individually attractive, does not and cannot make a film. Mr. Weinberg, for instance, applaudingly compares *Alexander Nevski* to *Die Nibelungen* and to *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc*: conceivably a not inaccurate comparison, but leading, surely, to a different conclusion from his; for both of these films, whatever the impression they gave originally, seem now more than a little over-weighted by their compositional elaboration. And so too, at intervals, does *Alexander Nevski*, whose leisured introductory passages occasion cumulatively (in the heretically-inclined) a distinct drowsiness.

Happily, that is not the whole story. The extensive battle-sequences which are the film's core have a convincing period-atmosphere, and when we eventually get to them we find enough flashes of clever and effective direction to persuade us to ignore most of the film's incidental defects. The control of masses of riding or running soldiery is first-class; and two incidents in the fighting one recalls particularly. The first is the brilliant illustration of medieval military tactics in the episode showing the last stand of the Teutonic Knights, formed into a solid phalanx of steel, broken at last only by main force; the other the realistic single combat between Alexander and the Teutonic Grand Master.

Far from an uninteresting film; and one of its chief items of interest is the ideological basis, which involves, strangely, the exaltation of an aristocrat. This is a new thing, but infinitely more understandable here than in Petrov's *Peter the Great*. Alexander, after all, is a half-legendary hero, while his beating-off of the brutal Teutonic invaders has an obvious reference to present-day events. But Peter—a Romanov!—is known to have been historically a vindictive and treacherous despot, whose hatred of monk and boyar, and delight in low company, arose from no love of the peasantry, but only from a love of his own ends. As for his "Westernisation" of Russia, it was a military more than a cultural revolution, and introduced by every oppressive means.

The film suffers structurally from an excessive vagueness of continuity: it would be extraordinarily difficult to tell, without knowing beforehand, that the time-lapse between Peter's defeat at Narva at the beginning and the flight of the Tsarevitch to Vienna at the end was as much as sixteen years. On the other hand, the reconstruction of the spirit of this age of utter barbarism is basically authentic—at times revoltingly so, with its howling mobs, its dirty monks, its fat and ignorant boyars and their cowed and dumpy consorts; and the fundamental lewdness, the coarseness of Peter and his friends are only partially concealed. But more than one unpleasant fact has been glossed over for the sake of Peter's unmerited glorification. Amid the to-do surrounding his union with his right-hand man's former mistress—a one-time kitchen-wench, picked up off the field of battle at Marienburg, and ultimately, by an odd twist of Fate, to succeed Peter as the Empress Catherine I—no mention is made of the Tsar's shabby treatment of his legal wife, Eudoxia; and the ending of the film at the date of the Tsarevitch Alexei's flight conveniently hides the cruel and unnatural vengeance which Peter took upon him two years later. In parenthesis, it is a queer thought that the man mainly responsible for the hounding-down of the wretched Alexei who is painted here in such deliberately unpleasing colours, was a Tolstoi, a direct ancestor of the

author of this tale. The film's climax, the hailing of Catherine's new-born son, is actually an anti-climax, for he died a few months afterwards.

Peter the Great is often disturbingly reminiscent of certain German films: of the morbid mood of *Das Maedchen Johanna*, for example; or, in its theme of opposition between father and son, of the temperamental violence of *The Old King and the Young King*. (*Absit omen.*) Much more could be added to these fragmentary remarks about the implications—historical, ideological, technical—of our two latest Russian importations, but there have been other films during the quarter, and space is limited. Let us conclude by pointing to the appearance of the same capable actor, Cherkassov, in both films,—as the vigorous hero in *Alexander Nevski* and as the weakling villain, Alexei, in *Peter the Great*. Versatility could not go further.

The end of April, roughly six weeks after Hitler's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, brought us what is temporarily at least our last Czech film, Vavra's *Innocence*. A modicum of sensational publicity accompanied it, for it was reported that Dr. Goebbels had been knocked about by the leading lady's husband for paying unwelcome attentions to her. This has nothing much to do with the film proper, which is a well-produced but not remarkably original tale about the tribulations of a working-girl's life in pre-Nazi Prague. The whole picture is characterised by the slow and sombre lyrical quality which one has grown to associate with Czech film-making. It is, in fact, too slow, and the theme, which is first cousin to *La Dame aux Camélias* (though in this case the man it was that died), is over-simplified, with some hardly satisfactory attempts at psychological treatment. Still, there is enough promise to make one regret that the bud is now unlikely to flower for a long time.

The French films continue their triumphal march through the Continental cinemas, and even show tendencies to spread beyond those slightly confined boundaries. At one time in early June there were nine French feature-films, playing simultaneously in West-End houses, as against an equal nine American and only four English. Such a situation must be quite unprecedented. Two of the French films had been dubbed, and they and two others were playing outside the Continental cinemas. It is also noticeable that some of the bigger suburban houses are making a practice of showing occasional French films.

This is no bad time to murmur again the caution that not *all* French productions are works of genius. As proof, we have only to consider the two films provided for us in this quarter by Abel Gance—not an inspiring pair, and depressing to have to review after the sincere, tormented power of a *J'accuse*. Their director may perhaps console himself with the thought that both are attempts at confessedly difficult tasks; but whether the tasks were worth attempting in the first place is more than doubtful.

Gance's *Louise* is a direct transcription of Charpentier's opera about love in Montmartre, its chief novelty being the presence of Grace Moore in the name-part, talking and singing in French with an elegant American accent. The sound-recording is good (though the orchestra occasionally half-drowns the voices) and the singing attractive; but the unreal operatic conventions are too much for the screen. One is constantly aware of the compressed spatial limits of the action, and it seems extraordinarily odd that the temporarily-eloped lovers, with the whole of Paris at their disposal, should conduct their celebrations within accurate

hearing-distance of the garret where the girl's parents live. Gance works his hardest, by perpetual dissolves and superimpositions, and by shunting his camera untiringly round and round, to add cinematic feeling and make the static dynamic; but without great effect. The English sub-titles, regrettably, are pure bathos.

As for *Beethoven* —! This effect is of the school according to which intricate musical compositions leap complete—fully orchestrated if need be—from the composer's head, on any slight sentimental provocation. Such nonsense is doubly inept in the case of Beethoven, whose manuscripts are packed with deletions and alterations. Where truthfulness of feeling is so lamentably lacking, there is no need to inquire into questions of chronology or fact: frankly, this is a bad film. Yet there are moments even here when one senses something better, something immeasurably better if it had found its proper place. One is struck not so much by the attempts, only partially valid, at a subjective use of the sound-track, as by the moving reflexions, though few and dispersed, of a compassionate and suffering spirit. They have in reality nothing to do with Beethoven: they are Gance himself.

A flatly poor film is probably best forgotten; but the more characteristic virtues of a country's production-style may be just as visible in a film of the second rank as in an outstanding one. Kurt Bernhardt's *Carrefour*, a simple melodrama of trial-scenes, blackmail, and romantic self-sacrifice, is not a bad example. Nobody could call this a great film, or a particularly profound one, but it has at any rate the qualities of restraint, attention to detail, and sensitiveness of performance, qualities which entitle it to be described, in its own minor way, as a sound job of work. Its central figure is Charles Vanel, an excellent specimen of the middle-aged, unheroic-looking French male actor who can always be counted on to produce a solid and highly competent rendering of his rôle.

Blackmail, like gun-running, appears to be a useful stand-by for melodrama, and crops up again in Raymond Bernard's *J'Étais une Aventurière*, a good traditional confection about a clever and beautiful woman crook with a pure heart. Falling deeply in love with an honest man—a millionaire, as it happens, but we are not cynics enough to think this had anything to do with it—she decides to abandon her confidence-trickeries and go straight; and her past returns temporarily to confuse her. Since, however, this is specifically comedy-melodrama, all is well in the end.

The film leans a little to the episodic, and falls rather sharply into two parts, with the lady's conversion and marriage hinging them loosely together. But the admixture of ironic comedy and exciting incident is neat and professional enough to keep us well-entertained for most of the film's hundred minutes, and the acting is attractive. Edwige Feuillère plays the heroine so intelligently that for the time being we are almost persuaded that accomplished female crooks really are as nice as this at heart. She shares the honours with Jean Tissier, as a likeable pick-pocket, who bears the whole climax on his shoulders with beautiful ease. Were it not for him, in fact, the mechanics of the climax might begin to make creaking noises.

J'Étais une Aventurière concerns itself with the idle rich; Marcel Carné's *Hôtel du Nord*, at the opposite extreme, deals with the Parisian low-life of which the French screen is so fond. Here, among the inhabitants of a working-class boarding-establishment on the banks of the Seine, is low-life indeed, in all its glory. Here are a harlot and a

procureur, a man who earns a strange living by giving blood-transfusions, and who is innocently unaware of being cuckolded by his best friend, and others of their kind. Here finally are a pair of desperate and impassioned lovers, who come grimly to the hotel bent on suicide, and all but succeed.

A film of this kind must stand or fall by its atmosphere: this one stands. It would be difficult to imagine a more faithful screen-portrayal of existence among an element of the Parisian poor. The environment is built up with care, the appropriate details filled in without too tender a regard for the conventions. The harlot is unsentimentalised—loud, slatternly, and vulgar—and the heroine got up as a genuine serving-wench; while mine host fumigates mattresses for bed-bugs with the hearty indifference of an old hand. It should not be thought that the result is an unrelieved essay in the sordid: on the contrary, it has a vigorous undercurrent of humour, and is full of implicit sympathy. The script, it is true, has a few obvious inadequacies, but they should not be permitted to weigh too heavily, for this is not primarily a script-writer's piece—nor even, despite the Jouvets and the Annabellas and the whole cast's admirable team-work, is it primarily an actor's piece. In its subtle force and unity of mood it is a tribute to the director, of whom much may be expected in the future.

Lastly we come to Renoir's version of Zola's famous novel, *La Bête Humaine*—low-life once more—with our virile friend Jean Gabin as the tragic engine-driver who is impelled by an evil heredity into uncontrollable homicidal lapses. That the work has certain defects does not prevent it from being commendable: to have undertaken so complex a task and come so near to pulling it off is a great thing. The sequences of the train in movement display considerable imagination; and Renoir's handling of most of his human material could scarcely be bettered. He has actually achieved the transmutation of Simone Simon from a pretty young starlet into an emotional actress. Any director who can do that is, beyond any shadow of doubt, a man of mettle.

There are passages where one has the powerful sensation of seeing the darkest recesses of the mind illuminated. Where weaknesses do occur is not as a rule in individual items but in structure. These structural weaknesses derive inevitably from a condensation into a film's abbreviated space of the minutiae of psychological development essential to the theme, and from the endeavour to convey complicated and abstract ideas in concrete form. Apart from the inclusion of one or two loose ends, perhaps not vitally important, we find also an unevenness of balance in the presentation of the engine-driver's character, the background of which is dim, obscured in favour of the single fact of his unfortunate heredity; and his intense love for his engine, so emphasised by Zola, sinks here into insignificance. It is a pity, finally, that the magnificent original ending, of the train rushing on driverless to destruction, should have been altered. Why?

Possibly we ask too much of the screen. Unwise theorists have said that it has no limitations, and some of us have come, unwisely, to believe them. Possibly *La Bête Humaine* attempts too much. Nevertheless, it contains a great deal that is of value—not omitting the appearance of Jean Renoir himself on the screen in the part of the ragged wretch, Cabuche. In the capacity of actor he need not fear to stand beside even Gabin and Carette.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

ANDREW RICE looks in vain for a
postman among the latest documentaries

I HAVE LEARNT something about Finland, ploughing, industrial diseases, Albania, recreation, Palestine, the Hebrides, and health services. That comprises my documentary bag of the past quarter.

Three of them—*Spare Time*, *Health of a Nation*, and *Men in Danger*—are G.P.O. Film Unit productions, thus further puzzling those who have never quite grasped that the Unit is concerned with subjects other than the Post Office. This time, for instance, it might very easily appear to be an auxiliary of the Ministry of Health, since health is the main point in each of these three films. There is, indeed, something to be said for the Unit changing its name. I appreciate its advertising value to the Post Office; but I also appreciate the confusion of somebody who goes off to see “one of those Post Office films,” and then finds that he is being shown a coal-mine, or a fishing fleet, or a crèche. He keeps looking for a pillar-box or a postman; and finds neither; and wonders why.

The voice only—not the actual appearance—of Mr. Ralph Richardson, has been enlisted to utter the commentary to *Health of a Nation*. This was a good move. It's a fine resonant voice; and it helps to hold together a film which I felt to be somewhat repetitive. It lasts a long time for a documentary; and though there is no objection to length provided that every minute is packed with essential material; in this case I detected certain stagnant patches, which detracted from one's interest, and “Get on with it” I found myself muttering. Briefly, the film traces the development of health services in this country during the past hundred years. At first there were none; now there are plenty; but many unhappy gaps still remain. 30,000 children still die in their first year; nearly 2,000 deaths in childbirth occur every year; cancer is increasing; though 1,000 people a day are moving out of slums, as late as 1933 there were 400,000 houses unfit to live in, the homes of 2,000,000 persons. Such are among the facts which *Health for the Nation* emphasises.

Next—how do workers spend their off-hours? This is a question answered by *Spare Time* which concentrates upon the workers in the steel, cotton, and coal industries. The camera-man has been to Sheffield and to Manchester. Whippets, racing pigeons, cycling, football, music, gardening, amateur theatricals—these and a dozen other means of relaxation are brought vividly to the screen. This film should go well in the North—everyone will be recognising Brother Bert on his allotment or Auntie Mabel lifting the roof of her mouth off at a local sing-song. The industrial North, as we know, is peculiarly industrious over its pleasures. It is there that the amateur theatre flourishes as nowhere else; and though your Yorkshire miner knows his way into a bar as well as any man, you may be sure that the conversation is by no means slow and lazy, but loud in ruthless argument about the performance of Sheffield

United or the “Messiah”, and he will be thinking of his grand young whippets or wondering what sort of a show the silver band will put up next week. So I enjoyed this film—all good, wholesome, stuff.

Now, to be a bit depressing again, a film about diseases—occupational (or industrial) diseases, in particular—*Men in Danger*. The men (and women) who work in danger are nowadays not so much those who operate dangerous machinery, for legislation and the precautions taken by employers themselves have greatly lessened the risks: guards over moving parts; fire-proof clothes; respirators; first aid equipment, and so on. It is rather the onset of certain diseases, which constantly threaten the workers in certain industries—lead poisoning, anthrax, cancer of the skin, silicosis. The film shows what is being done to prevent these, and to check them should they appear. Not many, I fancy, realise that the medical histories of 280,000 men and women are kept up to date by the Post Office Medical Registry throughout their entire working lives. For the medical research worker such a source of information is invaluable; and it is this, and many other unfamiliar aspects of this branch of medicine which *Men in Danger* explores.

Four travel pictures are next on my list—I saw all four at once one morning, so that I almost felt I should have brought a passport. Best of them, I thought, was *Whose Promised Land?*—a necessarily rapid but seemingly unbiased statement of the Jew v. Arab situation in Palestine. It is a situation which quite a lot of people find difficult to grasp. This film will help to clarify their ideas. It shows how the Arab has gradually gained his ascendancy in the Holy Land; it shows the difficulties which the Jews, especially those transplanted from Central Europe, are up against. There is a trace of drama in the spoken commentary which I found very properly suited to its subject, and there was a colloquialism and informality in its phrasing which the writers of stiff “lecturing” commentaries would do well to observe. Palestine is a danger spot; Albania, after the recent Italian invasion, is a sore one; and in *East of the West*—a survey of Albania—I had hoped to learn something of the latest developments out there. In contrast to *Whose Promised Land?* however, this film is a mere travelogue, taking note of local scenery, local customs, local costumes—but never a mention of the fate which has now overcome the little kingdom. So I fear that—capably photographed though it is—*East of the West* seemed a pointless production, rather like a newspaper with the main story of the hour omitted.

Arctic Highway and *Isles of the West* deal respectively with Finland and the Hebrides—just straight travel stuff which leaves one pleasantly informed but hardly excited. Good material for schools, I imagine; while *Speed the Plough*—a Strand Film production—is good material for those concerned with agriculture. It is “a story of new methods in Britain's oldest industry”, describing the modern mechanisation of farm implements—mechanical milking, mechanical hay sweeping, mechanical hoes, mechanical tillers, and artificial rain; till the farm-hand of to-day needs to be as much an engineer as an agriculturalist. This film is helped greatly by interviews with farmers in various parts of the country—the differing dialects were delightful to hear. But, considering all the mechanical devices here displayed, it's quite a wonder that they draw their living from the ordinary earth and raise livestock which is actually living.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

DEAR SIR,

The attention of our General Council has been drawn to the fact that there may not exist in some quarters a clear understanding as to what are the aims and activities of this Association. We think it advisable, therefore, to inform those connected with the development of the documentary film as a cultural and educational medium as to the constitution and functions of our Association.

The Associated Realist Film Producers Limited was formed in January, 1936. Its founder members were those people most closely connected with documentary production at the G.P.O. Film Unit, Strand Films and other independent units. Its committee of consultants included Mr. Cavalcanti, Mr. Robert Flaherty, Mr. John Grierson, and Mr. Julian Huxley. Its aim was to act as a consultancy body to potential sponsors of documentary films and to promote generally the interests of the documentary movement. It was not at any time a production company but placed any productions secured by it through existing units or companies.

When Film Centre was established in the autumn of 1937, the Association resolved to relinquish its promotional and consultancy work to that new group but resolved at the same time to continue as an independent co-ordinating body to the whole documentary movement. The Association accordingly was dissolved as a limited company and was at once reconstituted as a free society, with a greatly expanded membership.

The Association has now 50 members, including almost every person creatively associated with the production and distribution of documentary films. Its honorary members include the consultants of the original body, together with documentary film people in the United States and France. Its activities are conducted by a General Council elected annually and it has various officers, such as a Public Relations Secretary, a Social Secretary, a Lectures Secretary and a Research and Technical Secretary. Its aims are set out in its terms of constitution as follows:

1. To promote the interests of the Documentary Film Movement.
2. To preserve the independence and creative freedom of the Documentary Film workers and to safeguard the co-operative basis of the movement.
3. To maintain friendly relations between the Documentary Film movement and other branches of the Film Industry.
4. To promote friendly relations among all persons interested in the Documentary Film movement.
5. To act as a public relations body to the Documentary Film movement as a whole.
6. To arrange for periodical meetings and film shows and for the discussion of matters concerning the general or sectional interests of Documentary Film workers.
7. To supply to the Press accurate information concerning Documentary Films.

Although its members are drawn from the different units and companies which produce documentary films, the Association is an independent body and its views do not necessarily represent the views of those units or companies with which its members are associated. Because of the wide

representation of its members and honorary members, the Association does, however, speak and act with the authority of all those creative workers who are developing the documentary film as a cultural and educational force. It has at all times co-operated with other bodies whose work is in the national interest and it will continue to pursue this policy.

PAUL ROTH
General Secretary

*Associated Realist Film Producers,
34 Soho Square, London, W.1 (Gerrard 2484).*

To the Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

DEAR SIR,

I must accept Mr. Lewin's denial that his organisation is not financed by the motion-picture industry. I hope that he will be able to convince his fellow-countrymen likewise for almost every one of them with whom I discussed the teaching of film appreciation in America believed that Mr. Lewin's organisation was so financed. I hope, too, that Mr. Lewin will ask Mr. Will Hays, President of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc., to make it clear to which organisation the following passage in his latest report refers:

"A total of 30 additional Study Guides based on feature pictures produced by member companies were prepared in 1938 and have been greatly in demand. These books continued to prove of much value to educational groups interested in promoting photoplay appreciation and focused attention on exceptional pictures. When this project was originated, it was believed that eventually it would be self-sustaining because of its value to member companies. It has taken nearly five years to accomplish such a result. In the earlier years a great deal of patience and supervision was required, with considerable financial expenditure on the part of the Association." (27th March, 1939.)

But may I assure Mr. Lewin that I am not confusing his Guides with those of anybody else. I have read dozens of them. I wish I thought them "on a high plane of educational value." I think most of them childish and inept. Some of them, inevitably, contain a few interesting facts; one or two even contain a few stimulating questions. But I find in them no serious attempt to train young people to assess films seriously either for their form or their content. There is never any attempt to question a film's fundamental scale of values. They are simply "blurbs."

"Naturally," says Mr. Lewin, "when a film is adjudged a poor one, we do not prepare a guide for it." How then does he explain the Guides for such films as *The Soldier and the Lady*, *The Toast of New York*, *Music for Madame*, *Heidi*, *Vivacious Lady*, *If I Were King*, and *Marie Antoinette*? Are these on a "high plane of educational value"? I myself believe that even such films as these can be made the raw material of a training in discrimination, sensibility and social values. But I see no help for such training in the Guides.

ERNEST DYER

*61 Granville Court,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne 2.*

To the Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

DEAR SIR,

Readers of the admirable article, "Films for Citizenship," in your Spring number, in which Mr. R. S. Miles urges the need for, and potential value of, films illustrating the machinery of national and local government, may be interested to hear that this Association, in collaboration with Gaumont-British Instructional, has already embarked on a scheme on the lines he suggests.

A series of twelve one-reel films is projected and a sub-committee of the History and Arts panel of the British Film Institute has been appointed to advise on their production. The first four films will cover the theory and structure of the local government system in historical perspective: number one will survey the development of local government from Anglo-Saxon times; number two will show the working of a typical county borough; number three will provide a pictorial analysis of rates; and number four will explain the relations between local government and the central authority.

After this introductory "horizontal" survey of the system will come a series of "vertical" films showing the working of each of the departments of local government: law and order and public safety, including police, fire brigade, and A.R.P. work; roads and transport; housing and urban development; health services; education; public assistance; and two or more on the public utility services.

Each film, while keeping closely to facts, will be made as vivid as possible, using the technique of interwoven actuality and cartoon which, as Mr. Miles points out, has been so brilliantly exploited by Gaumont-British Instructional in *Some Aspects of the Coal Industry*. While primarily designed for older school children—and I feel sure that the teachers who are experimenting in education for citizenship to-day will welcome them—they will also, I believe, be of interest to adult audiences of all kinds.

As with all schemes of this nature, the biggest problem is finance. This Association, representing the staffs of local authorities all over the country, has undertaken to sponsor one of the films. Gaumont-British Instructional will themselves produce another. We are seeking sponsors for the remainder—local authorities, manufacturers, associations, groups, or individuals endowed with sufficient public spirit to recognise, in Mr. Miles's words, that "knowledge by the electorate of the workings of a democracy" is essential to democratic progress, and with the vision to appreciate the unique value of the film in conveying that knowledge. If any of your readers are themselves interested in this experiment in democratic education, or can assist it in any way, I shall be most happy to discuss it with them.

ALEC SPOOR

Public Relations Officer,
National Association of Local Government Officers.

On Monday, June 5th, Mr. E. M. Rich, Education Officer of the L.C.C., opened the studio which has been allotted to the London Schools' Film Society at Townsend Road Schools for use in the production of educational films. The band of enthusiasts whose pioneering activities are thus endowed with an official headquarters are to be congratulated. After the opening speeches portions of the "Safety First" film on which the Unit is at present engaged were shown.

TWO OF MANY

Here are reviews of a couple of the latest books. The first will be of particular interest to teachers, the second to those who like to keep records

Looking at Life—An introduction to biology by A. M. S. Clark and G. Buckland Smith. J. M. Dent & Sons. 2s. 6d.

The idea underlying the production of this book is explained by Mr. Hewer of the Imperial College of Science as follows: "The use of films in education has undoubtedly come to add to our other mechanically reproduced aids to teaching, such as text-books, diagrams and lantern slides. Films will continue to be used because of their vivid and dramatic presentation which cannot be obtained by other methods. They are vivid and dramatic because they rapidly place scenes and ideas alongside each other or in sequence, so that the learning mind is acutely impressed by this proximity. This rapidity of action in films has a disadvantage since the film is transitory and cannot be referred to again easily like a text-book. If the pupil does make a mistake in visual memory it may well persist, and there are few of us with really first-class visual memories incapable of making many mistakes.

"To prevent this happening with junior biology films, the authors have written a text-book to enable the pupil to recall to his or her mind with greater accuracy the dormant visual image. The text is, therefore, a running commentary often similar to that used in the film, sometimes amplified because there is plenty of time and space in a book. Unfortunately, we have not got a complete set of biology films covering all the aspects we should like, but there are enough to be going on with. In between there are brief sections acting as connecting links so that the story may be seen as a whole."

The method of construction imposed by the relationship between the book and the existing supply of educational films is naturally not an ideal one, and this weakness is somewhat aggravated by bad lay-out. For example, we pass in the middle of one page from *Breathing* to *The Life of Louis Pasteur*. On the other hand the illustrations are excellent and the book certainly deserves a warm welcome from those for whom it is primarily intended—teachers of biology who are making use of the film.

Foremost Films of 1938—By Frank Vreeland. Pitman. 15s.

This is the first volume of what it is hoped will become an annual and "compendious" work of reference dealing with the year's films. Mr. Vreeland has packed into his 348 pages an analysis of production in Hollywood, Britain, Europe and South America, together with lengthy excerpts from the scripts of ten famous films, including *Snow White*, *The Citadel* and *You Can't Take it With You*. But the portion many people will find most useful is the section containing summaries, castes and credit lists of some hundreds of feature pictures produced during 1938. Certainly a book for the shelves of all those intelligently interested in films.

SCREEN BRIGHTNESS

The size of your screen is of great importance if you want the best results from your projector. In this interesting article B. R. DAVIES, B.Sc., A.M.I.E.E., of the British Thomson-Houston Company, warns you against a number of pitfalls

DURING THE PAST few years the light output from substandard projectors has been considerably increased and a great deal of time has been devoted to producing this improvement. The object of this work was to provide a brighter picture, as it was felt that this was necessary to widen the field for substandard equipment.

Many people will remember looking at substandard pictures some years ago and feeling that they were not quite good enough to be enjoyed, but that an increase in screen brightness would make them enjoyable. It is possible that the same people could see a demonstration to-day and think that the same criticism would apply, not realising that formerly the criticism was of the machine and now of the operation of the machine.

Manufacturers have increased the light output, but they cannot guarantee an increase in screen brightness. As equipment improved, the scope of the equipment increased and larger pictures were necessary, but in many cases the increase in size has been unnecessarily out of proportion to the increase in light and the same or a decreased screen intensity has resulted. A person, having read that a certain new type of machine has double the light output of his own, on purchasing the new machine buys a screen twice as wide as his old one. He does not realise that to obtain a picture twice as wide he requires four times as much light to keep the intensity constant.

Generally, too much importance is given to a large picture and most people use a screen too large for the requirements of the audience.

COMPARISON WITH CINEMA PICTURE

In considering the best picture size a good standard of comparison is the average cinema picture. In a cinema seating 1,000 people the average picture is 15 feet wide and the total light reaching the screen is in the neighbourhood of 2,000 lumens giving a screen intensity of 11 foot-candles. In a cinema under these conditions a decrease in size would be more acceptable to the audience than a decrease in screen brightness.

In a 16 mm. equipment the maximum light output that has been obtained with an incandescent lamp is of the order of 220 lumens, and to obtain the same screen brightness as in a cinema the picture would have to be 5 ft. wide.

A compromise is often necessary, but it is advisable to make screen intensity the prime consideration and to keep the picture as near to 5 ft. wide as possible. In a large hall a larger screen is essential, but should always be kept to a minimum for the requirements of the audience.

It is seldom that a substandard equipment is used in a room exceeding 100 ft. long and assuming that a high-class projector is being used, a picture 8 ft. 6 in. wide can be obtained, and it is considered that this is suitable for an audience in a hall of this size.

If we assume the light output of the machine to be 220 lumens the screen intensity with this size of picture will be 4 foot-candles, so that it is a little more than one-third the intensity of the cinema screen. The picture brightness can be increased by using a silver screen and this will be considered later. To the operator standing by the machine at the back of the hall a picture 8 ft. 6 in. wide may seem only just large enough, but it has to be remembered that all his audience is nearer to the screen than he is, and for the majority the picture will be quite large enough. If the picture is made larger the screen intensity is decreased and the whole of the audience is affected.

TABLE.—Assuming output of projector to be of the order of 220 lumens.

Length of Hall	Width of Picture	Light Intensity at Screen in foot-candles	Type of Screen	Apparent Picture Brightness foot-candles	Remarks
70-100 ft.	8 ft. 6 in.	4	Beaded or Silver	10 or 8	Arrangement of audience is important with beaded screen
40-70 ft.	6 ft. 6 in.	5.5	Silver	11	
30-40 ft.	5 ft.	11.6	Linen	11.6	A silver screen could be used
30 ft.	4 ft.	18	Linen	18	
20 ft.	3 ft.	20*	Linen	20*	*Lens stopped down
Under 20 ft.	2 ft.	20*	Linen	20*	*Lens stopped down

For small halls a smaller screen should be used, but the best size cannot be determined until the types of screen available have been considered.

TYPES OF SCREEN

The screen that gives the best definition and the widest viewing angle is white linen. There are available, however, other types of screen such as the silver screen and the glass bead screen which gives an increased screen brightness, and it is often necessary to use these in conjunction with sub-standard equipment.

For the same screen intensity a good silver screen doubles the picture brightness compared with a linen screen when viewed from a point normal to the screen. As the viewing point is moved from the normal the picture brightness decreased until at an angle of about 40 degrees to the normal the linen screen is equal to the silver screen. If the viewing angle is further increased a brighter picture is obtained from the linen screen.

Some definition is lost when using a silver screen, but often the increased brightness obtained more than compensates for this and the colour of the picture is improved. The colour of the light from an incandescent lamp is not so white as that from an arc lamp used in a cinema, and a silver screen tends to compensate for this fact.

A glass bead screen increases the screen brightness in the ratio of about 2.5 to 1 compared with a linen screen, when viewed from a point normal to the screen. As the viewing point moves from the normal the picture brightness falls off rapidly and becomes equal to the linen screen at an angle of approximately 20 to 25 degrees to the normal. As the angle is further increased the brightness falls off considerably.

For general purposes a silver screen is the most useful although when the light intensity is sufficient a linen screen should be used.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PICTURE SIZE

Another factor that influences the size of screen to be used is the stray light falling on to the screen. This cannot be dealt with adequately here, but it should be borne in mind that where stray light is falling on to the screen, the size of the picture should be reduced as the effect of stray light is to decrease the apparent screen brightness.

Although the general tendency is to obtain a picture too large for the luminous output of the projector it should be pointed out that it is possible to make the picture too small. If a high class projector, designed for demonstrations to large audiences, is used in a small room it may be possible to obtain a picture only 2 ft. wide. In these circumstances the screen brightness will be too great and the flicker on the screen will be noticeable, and to obtain a good picture a stop should be inserted in the projection lens.

A stop made of black paper can be inserted easily in the front of the lens and the aperture can be adjusted by enlarging the hole in the paper until a good picture is obtained. It is often better to do this using a small screen when showing to a small audience situated near the screen, as if a large screen is used picture jump becomes apparent and disturbing.

SIZE OF PICTURE

It is impossible to give any definite data for picture sizes but the table on the previous page will at least serve

as a guide. It is assumed that a high-class substandard projector is being used and that there is only a small amount of stray light.

If the stray light is considerable the screen size will have to be reduced.

ARRANGEMENT OF AUDIENCE

The arrangement of the audience depends on the type of screen being used but there are one or two principles that apply for all types.

The distance between the screen and the front of the audience should be at least two and a half times the height of the picture. Where the floor of the room is level it is usual to raise the screen some considerable distance from the floor so that the whole of the audience can see it, and in this case the distance between the screen and the audience must be increased.

When using a silver or glass bead screen the angle that any observer makes with the normal to the screen must be carefully considered; and it is necessary to make the front row of the audience quite short, increasing the length of the rows gradually until the full width of the hall is utilised. Before the demonstration the operator should ensure that no chairs are placed at a position outside the cut-off angle of the screen.

It is hoped that this article will help some operators of substandard equipment to get the best picture possible in the various conditions which have to be encountered.

AND NOW

having learnt how to project your films to the best advantage, here is a review of a useful little book which tells you how to make them

How to Make Good Movies (Kodak) \$2

The purpose of this book is conveyed in the title and further amplified in the sub-title: "A non-technical handbook for those considering the ownership of a movie camera and for those already actively engaged in movie making who want to improve the interest and quality of their personal film records." It is, in short, a textbook on amateur silent film production which begins where the camera instruction manual leaves off. And yet the word textbook is perhaps misleading, for it has been prepared with all the cunning of the advertiser's art in lay-out. The style of the text is simple and readable, and the reader is beguiled through it by a profusion of photographs (some in most attractive colour) which lucidly illustrate every point made. Some idea of the scope covered in its 230 pages of art paper is given by a list of the principal headings: focusing exposure, choice of film, filters, lenses, continuity, composition, Kodachrome, movies at night, trick shots, play-making, editing, titling, showing movies. Although Kodak products are naturally described, such indirect advertisement is kept to an unobtrusive minimum, and its advice is on the whole of such general application that it cannot fail to be of use and interest to all amateur film makers. E.H.L.

WANTED—A SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING

"Surely there are sufficient teachers to-day, trained and interested in the use of instructional films, to act as 'missionaries' in their own areas" says G. BUCKLAND SMITH, organiser of visual education at Brentwood School

THE UNDERLYING BASIS of the use of films in the school is the psychological relation between the cinema and the child. The influence of the cinema upon young spectators is very marked and, according to observers, increases with age, reaching a peak at adolescence. On the average, too, cinema attendance amongst children increases with age again reaching its highest point at that formative time when, unfortunately, so many are without any contact with educational organisations.

The strength of this influence lies in the film's combination of visual and aural appeal in the atmosphere of heightened suggestibility of the darkened room. This is reinforced by the contrast of light values and the movements on the screen, the movement of material, the movement of the camera, and the movement of interest which is achieved by cutting.

It is this quality of compelling interest which, allied with fiction and the popularity of the acted story, has made the cinema such a universal entertainment in so short a time. It is this same quality which fits the film for many instructional functions, only a few of which have, as yet, been tried.

The comparatively slow progress made in this country in the adoption of the film as an educational aid can be attributed to several reasons. Not the least is the apathy with which so many educationists view all new developments; the cinema has taken no longer than other novelties to attract the attention of the educational world.

The introduction of new methods and materials in teaching is always due, especially in this country, to the work of an enthusiastic few who, in the particular case of the film, have been especially hampered by the comparative expense of the medium when used in isolated localities and by the attention which has had to be paid at the same time to other urgent educational needs necessitated by the movement of population and the growth of public interest in the welfare and teaching of children.

The introduction of the film, however, has been successfully achieved in spite of all these obstacles, and educationists can no longer choose not to recognise it. Its power, its importance as an industry, its widespread popularity as an entertainment, and its possibilities as a propagandist medium make it necessary that it should be considered as a factor in our national life of sufficient importance to merit some attention being given to it during the education of a child. Apart from that, the film to-day serves as the nation's shop-window showing to other peoples of the world our attitudes and ways of life quite as much as our customs and our clothes. If a standard of films is to be set which will truly represent our national culture it is essential that a higher standard of public demand should be achieved and this can only be done for to-morrow by the education in film taste of the younger generation of to-day.

Education has been defined as the gradual adjustment of the growing man to his environment. It consists mainly of two functions which, however, cannot be distinguished

separately in the actual process. The first consists of the supply of information and the inculcation of methods of reasoning which will enable the student later to make himself understood amongst others, to acquire further knowledge, and to provide for himself. The second consists in imparting a background of knowledge against which the student is trained to assess natural events and turn these to his cultural advantage.

If this definition is true, the cinema cannot be disregarded during a child's education since it forms such an important part of the environment of to-day. It must no longer be left outside the school so that the child regards it as something apart from his encouraged progress but must be brought in to form as integral a part of the school life as it is of the life outside the classroom so that the same reasoning and understanding may be applied to it as to literature, music, painting, and the theatre.

Not that the cinema presents an influence against which the teacher must struggle; that is not adjustment. But it must be realised that a film constitutes an event just as much as the inspection of a factory, the witnessing of injustice, or the experience of a crisis, an event which will in part conflict with, in part reinforce the emotional attitude of the spectator and that this influence will be more marked upon the embryo emotional attitude of the child than upon the steady and fully effective character of the normal adult.

Adjustment to this influence is only possible when these emotional impulses are, to some extent at least, under the guidance and subjected to the interpretation of the teacher. This can only be begun when the horizon of the school has been widened to include the cinema just as it has had, in recent years, to embrace the changing social conditions, craftwork, and technical instruction.

The film can be introduced into the school in a number of ways. It can be used as entertainment, providing a means whereby the teacher is able to show his pupils films especially selected to suit their tastes and opinions.

It can be used as an instructional aid when not only does it enable the teacher to deal with many subjects more efficiently than by any other means but it also encourages the pupils to look upon the film as something more than entertainment and to realise the significance with which the film is regarded in more serious matters.

Lastly, it can be introduced as a definite school subject either occupying its own time in the curriculum or forming part of an English or a Drama course. Film Appreciation is only taught in a few schools in this country, but a great many more are approaching towards it by the institution of school film societies where training in film taste is provided in out-of-school hours. A good deal of investigation is being carried on into possible techniques of teaching film appreciation, not the least interesting being the consideration which the B.B.C. is giving to a suggested series of broadcast talks on the subject of films.

The advent of the cinematograph has presented a

problem to the educationist which cannot be solved by ignoring its importance in our social life. A sympathetic understanding of the medium and the part which it should play in the education of a child would enable the teacher to prepare his pupils for the influence which it will bring to bear upon their later lives and to harness its powers for instructional purposes. It would prevent the making of so many mistakes which are common in film-using schools to-day: the showing of shoddy, common-place films, the stopping of films for the elaboration of static details, the showing of films on small screens and in daylight, and that extraordinary attitude which denies the place of the sound-film in the classroom.

The film schools and instruction courses for teachers can do a lot towards this end. An elementary knowledge of the qualities of film and an appreciation of the use to which these qualities can be applied in education are quite as essential as the ability to manipulate projection equipment. This training would not only assist teachers in the

adaptation of films to their particular classroom methods but would also qualify them to co-operate in the production of films.

A great deal could be done, too, towards fostering this appreciation of the film medium amongst teachers by the establishment of local teachers' film groups similar to those few which have already proved so successful in London, Middlesex, Manchester, and elsewhere. The British Film Institute, well aware of the importance of such groups, is forming a new panel of practising teachers, one of whose main objects will be the setting up of further groups.

Some sixty students will be attending each of the film schools to be held at London and Loughborough during August, while some three hundred or so have already been through similar courses. Surely there are sufficient teachers to-day, trained and interested in the use of instructional films, to act as "missionaries" in their own areas and so do much towards widening the practice of educational cinema.

TECHNICAL ARTICLES

We publish below, for the convenience of our readers, our usual list of technical articles which have been published recently. These may be consulted at the Institute's premises by arrangement

PHOTOGRAPHY (PROFESSIONAL)

Photographic Effects in the Feature Production *Topper*; R. Seawright and W. V. Draper (*S.M.P.E. Journal, January*).

Undersea Cinematography; E. R. F. Johnson (*S.M.P.E. Journal, January*).

The Surface of the Nearest Star (Astronomical cinematography at the McMath-Hulbert Observatory, Michigan); R. R. McMath (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

The Centenary of Photography and the Motion Picture; Edward Epstein (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

Submerging a Camera; Russell T. Ervin, Jr. (*Movie Makers, May*).

The M.G.M. Semi-automatic follow-focus device; J. Arnold (*S.M.P.E. Journal, April*).

PHOTOGRAPHY (AMATEUR)

A Pioneer-Built Universal Titler; W. B. Brandegee (*Movie Makers, January*).

"Stills" in Movies; Kenneth F. Space (*Movie Makers, February*).

A School Club's Film; Helen Rees Clifford (*Movie Makers, February*).

Home Built Light Units; Erik von Ladau (*Movie Makers, February*).

Successful Indoor Lighting; Nestor Barrett (*Movie Makers, March*).

Incident Light Measuring; F. C. Bobier (*Movie Makers, March*).

SOUND

Characteristics of Film Reproducer Systems; F. Durst and E. J. Shortt (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

Some Production Aspects of Binaural Recording for Sound Motion Pictures; W. H. Offenhauser, Jr. and J. J. Israel (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

Co-ordinating Acoustics and Architecture in the Design of the Motion Picture Theatre; C. C. Potwin and B. Schlanger (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

The Lighting of Motion Picture Theatre Auditoriums; F. M. Falge and W. D. Riddle (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

Some Practical Accessories for Motion Picture cording; R. O. Strock (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

The Electrical Production of Musical Tones; S. T. Fisher (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

Improving the Fidelity of Disk Records for Direct Playback; H. J. Hasbrouck (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

A Motion-picture Dubbing and Scoring Stage; C. L. Lootens, D. J. Bloomberg and M. Rettinger (*S.M.P.E. Journal, April*).

Unidirectional Microphone Technique; J. P. Livadan and M. Rettinger (*S.M.P.E. Journal, April*).

Artificially Controlled Reverberation; S. K. Wolf (*S.M.P.E. Journal, April*).

A 16 mm. Studio Recorder; R. W. Benfer (*S.M.P.E. Journal, May*).

PROJECTION

A Consideration of the Screen Brightness Problem; O. Rub (*S.M.P.E. Journal, May*).

PROCESSING

The Evaluation of Motion Picture Films; Semimicro Testing; J. E. Gibson and C. G. Weber (*S.M.P.E. Journal, January*).

Latent Image Theory and Its Experimental Application to Motion Picture Sound-Film Emulsion; W. J. Albersheim (*S.M.P.E. Journal, January*).

An Opacimeter Used in Chemical Analysis; R. M. Evans and G. P. Silberstein (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

Chemical Analysis of an M.Q. Developer; R. M. Evans and W. T. Hanson, Jr. (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

Latest Developments in Variable-Area Processing; A. C. Blaney and G. N. Best (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

TELEVISION

The Road Ahead for Television; I. J. Kaar (*S.M.P.E. Journal, January*).

Some Television Problems from the Motion Picture Standpoint; G. L. Beers, E. W. Engstrom and I. G. Maloff (*S.M.P.E. Journal, February*).

MISCELLANEOUS

A Color-Temperature Meter; E. M. Lowry and K. S. Weaver (*S.M.P.E. Journal, March*).

New Uses of Sound Motion Pictures in Medical Instruction; Henry Roger (*S.M.P.E. Journal, May*).

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